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V A N D E L E U R.

VOL. II.

LONDON :
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V A N D E L E U R ;

OR,

A N I M A L M A G N E T I S M.

A NOVEL.

Ye shall have miracles, ay, sound ones too,
Seen, heard, attested, everything but true.

Veiled Prophet.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON :

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1836.

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VANDELEUR.

CHAPTER IX.

That work which most the public voice decries
Is still the fav'rite in its author's eyes ;
And thus you 'll find amid her infant host
The mother loves her idiot boy the most.

A.

MATTERS continued at Beauton Park pretty much as we left them in the last chapter, when Major Vandeleur's regiment was ordered to the south of Ireland. It now became necessary that he should renew the subject of his marriage with Gertrude, which, from delicacy towards the afflicted family, and deep sympathy in their sufferings, he had not touched upon since the fatal accident.

Gertrude had given him no credit for his forbearance ; for she had scarcely remembered his situation, in the tumult of her grief, until recalled to a recollection of it by his gently claiming a fulfilment of her engagement. She turned as pale as death.

“ What is the matter, my sweetest Gertrude ?” he asked, alarmed at the excess of her emotion.

She paused a moment ; then, fixing her eyes upon him, “ You do not—you cannot mean that you would remove me from Herbert as he is now ?” she replied.

Her lover felt embarrassed, and at a loss how to answer her, between the fear of awakening her alarm for the permanency of her brother’s bereavement, and that of appearing selfishly impatient to remove her from him in his present state.

She perceived his hesitation, and throwing her arms fondly, but pleadingly, round his neck, —“ No,” she said, “ my Godfrey loves me too

sincerely—loves Herbert too sincerely, for that: but to remove the temptation from you, I here solemnly swear in the presence of Heaven,” (falling on her knees as she spoke,) “that no entreaties shall induce me to become your wife until six months from this time are expired; and that any attempt on your part to dissuade me from this, or even any attempt to see me before then, after you shall have left England, I shall consider as unworthy of you as of myself. Give your mind to your professional duties, and I shall by that time know what we may have to expect, and shall either share with you my happiness, or seek consolation in your affection for my misery.”

She leaned her head against his knees, overcome by the excitement to which she had yielded. He attempted not to raise her; a death-pang shot across his heart. “Is it possible, after all, that she loves me not?” he asked himself, and felt nearly as he felt the morning that he parted with Lady Seaton in the saloon.

Gertrude, astonished at his silence, looked up; and when she saw the expression of agonized doubt upon his manly countenance, she sprang from her knees, and standing a moment before him, "You do not—no—it is not possible that you doubt my affection, Godfrey!" she exclaimed. "Oh, God! so deal with me, as I believe no woman ever yet loved as I love you!" and she clasped her hands, and raised her eyes to heaven.

Vandeleur folded her to his heart. "And how is it then, my Gertrude, that you can prefer anything to becoming my wife?" he whispered.

She raised her sweet eyes to his, as if considering how she could best explain to him her feelings; then, as if hopeless of making him understand them, she ejaculated, "Ah, Godfrey, it is evident you never had a brother or sister."

"The more then do I require a wife," he whispered again.

"And you shall have a wife, Godfrey," she

replied ; “ but not yet ! take her not believing that she neglects a sacred duty to become yours. Wait for a few short months ; go with your regiment to Ireland, fulfil the conditions I have imposed, and believe that at the end of that time I shall be ready either to return with you there, or wherever else your duty may call you.”

“ But, dearest Gertrude, if you will not accompany me now—and I scarcely intended to urge it—why will you not become mine before we part, and remain still to attend on our dear Herbert ?”

“ To what purpose, Godfrey ? Is it that the time and scene are so fitted for rejoicing ? or is it that I shall not have enough to occupy my thoughts without feeling myself a widowed bride ?—No, Godfrey, believe me I shall not so readily part with my husband ; and trust me, it will be more for your own happiness, as well as mine, to receive me when my mind can be more wholly yours.”

To these arguments, accompanied as they were by a gentle determination of manner, which she endeavoured to soften by half playful, half serious smiles, Vandeleur was forced to yield. Indeed, from the moment of her solemn vow he had very little hopes of being able to prevail with her to change her purpose; and in a few days after this conversation he departed with his regiment for their new destination.

Poor Gertrude, in banishing her lover from her side, and exacting a solemn promise from him, that, unless recalled by herself, no other circumstance should induce him to make an attempt to see her again until six months should have elapsed, not only thought, in the enthusiasm of her young sorrow, that she had made a sort of propitiatory offering to poor Herbert; but, more rationally, that she should by this absence have more time, and undivided thoughts and attention, to bestow on him. But, alas! when days, weeks, months, passed over,

and she saw no change in that beloved object, she felt that time hung but too heavily on her hands. She had not even the usual excitements of the sick-room, the hopes and fears from hour to hour of some change either favourable or the reverse. There she sat from morn till night, watching the still gentle, uncomplaining, but listless and vacant countenance, until scarcely a hope lingered in her own breast that it ever would become even intelligent enough to thank her, and yet she had no one on whose breast to lay her head and weep.

Her lover's letters, indeed, were affectionate, consoling, and generally entertaining; yet they could afford little more than a temporary relief to one whose youthful spirits were sinking under the pressure of a misfortune ever before her eyes.

Her father, too, whose good-humour was rather derived from animal organization, than command or buoyancy of mind, began to droop under the loss of the field-sports, which to him

were as food and light, but which he had almost totally abandoned since his son's bereavement ; and though kinder in his manner to his daughter than heretofore, yet so new was he to sorrow himself, and so unused to bestow tenderness upon her, that he was angry at her melancholy, because it brought that sorrow to his mind, and his very caresses generally ended in reproaches which drove her from him in tears.

Miss Wilson, who still hung on amongst them, was the only one who did not seem to sink beneath the visitation ; but still, though she was, if not kinder, certainly more attentive and watchful in the sick-room than perhaps might have been expected, there was nothing in her dull and unswerving placidity to check or to repel the gloom of which she seemed insensible, while it usurped so fearful a dominion over the other members of the lately happy family. Winter, too, had set in in its most depressing form,—of sleet, and dark inces-

sant rain ; and, while this precluded all refreshment to the jaded spirits from without, close confinement, and consuming anxiety within, began at last to make inroads upon the hitherto unbroken health of Gertrude. This did not serve to enliven the scene ; and such was the state to which the nerves of the whole family were at last reduced, that they all agreed in the belief that never before were such hideous howlings of the wintry blast heard around the house of Beauton, or amid its leafless trees. When once the nerves are in a state to be at all affected by this, there are few things produce a more painful impression upon them ; but it is one, the force of which can be fully conceived only in a large, dreary, and nearly uninhabited mansion in the country.

In the midst of this gloom, sickness, and depression, a letter arrived from Lady Augusta Starling, who had gone early in the winter to a dowager aunt of hers in London, whose old-

fashioned habits still prompted her to fly the country with the last green leaf, and seek the warmth and shelter of the metropolis.

The wisest cannot foresee what will eventually tend to their advantage. Lady Augusta would have been extremely well pleased to have deferred her visit to a later period; but her aunt pretty plainly intimated to her, that if she intended as heretofore to make the house in Berkeley-square her home during the whole of the *belle-season*, she must make up her mind to endure it also for a part of the *dowager-season*; and she was forced to comply. The consequence was, that when other fair anglers were only beginning to weave their *nets* and gauzes for the coming season, Lady Augusta wrote to inform Gertrude that she was already converting hers into her wedding gown.

“And now, Gertrude,” continued the lively young lady, after very kind and anxious inquiries, “comes the pith of the story. You must be my bridesmaid;—nay, do not start, or shrink. The

matter stands thus : married in London I cannot be ; people would either say that I took the man at a week's notice, *en passant*, or that I remained in town out of season on purpose to catch any stray creature that happened for his own misfortune to be passing through. Now, as I like neither of these alternatives, I have determined upon retiring to 'cool shades and purling brooks.' What though the shades may be of Lapland temperature just now, and the purling brooks swollen to roaring torrents, — still, however, they may *feel*, they will *sound* pretty well ; and people may then suppose, you know, that the victim came down to shoot or hunt with papa, and when he thought he had been most successful, only brought home a wounded *hart* for his pains :—may that pass ? However, in addition to all these wise reasons, papa chooses that the *wedding* should take place at the old mansion ; because, as Cranberry is in Paris, there is nobody here to *give me away*, and all that ; and papa says he would rather see me die an old maid

than come up from the foxes and hares just now : so, Gertrude, consent *you must*. I shall say nothing of Lord Luscombe but what I suppose you know already ; that he is just returned from his embassy to the court of T * * * *, &c. honours which are never conferred on *boys* : but then, you know, I am very steady. Adieu ! dearest Gertrude,

Ever yours,

A. S.

“ P.S. Remember, I do not consider that a bridesmaid fulfils her duty unless she watches by the bride during the *honey-moon* at least, to brush away any little imperfections that might turn the honey into gall during that important season.”

“ How did this letter come ? ” said Gertrude to her father, observing that there was no post-mark on it.

“ It came under cover to me,” he replied. “ She wrote to me also, to beg I would if possible enforce her request.”

“ But I hope you have no thoughts of doing so, my dear father. Lady Augusta can be at no loss for friends on this occasion ; and indeed, indeed, sir, I have neither spirits nor inclination for such scenes at present.”

“ Why, that’s the very reason, child, she wishes you to go. Paris is such a gay dashing place just now, that they say it would put a frog into spirits.”

“ Paris, sir ! — why do you mention Paris ? ”

“ What ! why, did she not mention it to you ? Nay, then, perhaps I have said it too soon : but, hang me ! if she could have hit on a worse schemer or manœuvrer in the world to second her than myself ; even Miss Wilson would have done better. But the short and the long of it is this, Gertrude ; she goes for a month to Paris immediately after the wedding, and she insists upon your accompanying her ; and, I must say, I think it would do you a great deal of good.”

“ My dear father, I would not think of it for worlds !”

“ That ’s agreeable, when I say I wish that you should.”

“ I did not hear you say so, sir ; but, even so, I am sure you will think better of it. I could not leave Herbert in such a state.”

“ Why, what good are you doing him ? God knows, if you were, I would be the last to bid you go ; but as you cannot do him any good, I wish very much you would go. You know very well Mr. C. in his last visit said you were the patient yourself now, and that change of scene was absolutely necessary for you. It ’s quite enough to see one of you dying, or worse than dying, before my eyes.—Come, don’t cry, Gertrude, there ’s a good girl ! Think of what I ’ve said.” And muttering “ I can’t stand this !” he hastily left the room.

Lady Augusta herself arrived a few days after to reiterate her petition ; but not all that she could urge, nor all that Mr. C., in answer

to a letter from her father, could prescribe, had the slightest weight with Gertrude, until a letter arrived from her lover, written in a tone of real alarm at the accounts her father had given him of her health, and assuring her that if she did not consent to try change of air and scene, which the present favourable opportunity offered to her, he should not only consider her as failing in her regard for his happiness, but should consider himself released from his promise, and bound to fly to her immediately, to urge by his presence all that his wishes in absence failed to effect.

“For my sake!” (those irresistible words from lips we love)—“For my sake! go, my Gertrude,” he continued. “Every one that can, ought to see Paris at this interesting moment, when the national feeling is in a ferment that casts up all its peculiarities in turn. Depend upon it, that after this it will subside, and, by constant and friendly intercourse with England, in time become so assimilated with us, that little of interest will remain in visiting it. Go,

then, my dearest, that I may always have to boast of *my wife* having seen it,—not in its glory, but ere yet the shadow of its glory had passed from the earth. And let me whisper, that as three months of my probation are over, and my happiness is to be crowned within three more, it will be a pity to lose such an opportunity for making up such a *trousseau* as shall enable you to kill as many ladies by envy of your *dress*, as I shall gentlemen by envy of *my wife*. Farewell, dearest! Date your next letter except one from Paris.”

Vandeleur’s wishes, thus urged, were not to be resisted; but even in giving her consent to Lady Augusta she betrayed the effort it was to her spirits, and how gladly she would have been spared it.

“And do you really love Lord Luscombe, Augusta?—a man old enough to be your father!” she asked, as if almost in hopes still to escape, even by rendering her friend dissatisfied with her own prospects.

“ I really love his rank and station in life : nay, Gertrude, don't look so shocked. Well, then, I really like all I've known of him ; and he is very well esteemed as to character, and all my family liked the match, and I'm very dutiful and obedient. Now is not that the way to say it ? What ! not a smile yet ? Why, you are really sadly changed, my poor Gertrude.”

“ I am indeed, Augusta,” said the poor girl, bursting into tears, “ and I fear you will heartily repent of the companion you have chosen ;—but it is not yet too late ?”

“ Nay, that is not kind, dear Gertrude. Though not a very old creature myself, yet I know how much change of scene produces change of feeling ; and I look to giving you back to Godfrey the blooming bride he first courted.”

A faint smile and as faint a blush were now just visible.

“ And I assure you, Gertrude, that is part

of my motive for being so very urgent, after you expressed so much dislike to the plan. But you must second me yourself, and not refuse to be amused."

"I shall certainly at least not keep out of the way of it, and will promise to do all in my power, dear, kind Augusta, that you may not repent of your good-nature."

As the time for the marriage to take place now rapidly approached, Gertrude grew, if possible, more assiduous than ever about her brother. At least she changed the course of her assiduity; and all the affectionate tenderness she had hitherto delighted in exercising towards him herself, she now as anxiously laboured to instil into Miss Wilson: there was not an hour in the day in which she did not endeavour to impress upon her how much his safety depended on the most affectionate attention and watchfulness. That impression was probably beyond the poor woman's limited intellect to retain; but Gertrude saw with delight, that the

force of habit and obedience seemed very tolerably to supply the place of feeling ; and what she had now seen Gertrude do for months, she seemed able enough to follow. And alas ! the state in which Herbert continued seemed to require but little more.

He now seldom uttered a distinct sentence, or manifested the least desire to move about ; and as the weather was by no means such as to induce them to put any force on his inclinations, he sat from morning till night in his arm-chair, in a kind of dreamy state of existence ; as if the vital spark still lingered, but in its very lowest proportion.

Still, although Gertrude felt better satisfied with Miss Wilson's attention than she perhaps expected, she could not prevail on herself to commit so precious a charge to one of her calibre, who, if any change should take place, would certainly never think it called for a change of treatment ;—nor yet to her anxious, but impatient and unskilful father. When,

therefore, she first made up her mind to accompany Lady Augusta, she immediately wrote, with her father's consent, to old Mr. Mason, to mention the circumstances of the family, and to entreat that he would return to watch over his beloved pupil in her absence.

“And now take care, Miss Wilson,” Mr. Evelyn said with a gravity and seriousness which he knew would have due weight with her, and which now were more consonant to his feelings than jesting,—“take care that I hear no more of your outrageous attacks upon the poor old man; for I tell you plainly, that, by the Lord! he never shall again leave my house for you—if indeed he will consent to enter it while you are here.”

Miss Wilson hung her head; and, exactly as a child of ten years old might do when reprimanded for a fault, she said in a low voice, “I will not, sir, say any more to him!”

Not a word had been heard of Mr. Mason since he left Beauton Park. In the first days

of affliction no one thought of the poor old man ; and when at last Vandeleur recollected and wrote to him, he never seemed to have taken any notice of the letter. Gertrude wrote again in the course of the winter, still without producing a reply ; but as she could not for a moment do him the injustice to attribute this silence either to forgetfulness of his affection for Herbert, or want of sympathy in his misfortune, she set it down either to some accident to himself, or some *oddity*—too inexperienced to know that *oddities* of his sort are only odd in manner or expression, never in feeling. Indeed the very word *odd* on human lips, which are so prone to speak evil, should be (and perhaps is) much more generally understood to imply something above, rather than below, the common ; something which inferior minds cannot exactly comprehend, and yet, instinctively feeling that it is above censure, satisfy their consciences by the word “ *odd*.”

As poor Gertrude, however, had no feelings

of envy towards Mr. Mason, and was willing to give him credit for all that was good and kind, she now wrote again on the eve of her departure, and was preparing to leave home next morning with a very heavy heart indeed, when the old man himself arrived ; but so worn and so altered, that every one started at his appearance. On being questioned, however, he merely said that he had not been well all the winter, and was a little fatigued by the journey.

“ A little !—why, you seem scarcely able to stand,” said Mr. Evelyn.

“ I shall be better presently, sir,” he said, as he sank almost fainting into a chair.

Gertrude brought him a glass of wine, which he hastily swallowed, and seemed to revive a little. .

“ But what has been the matter, Mr. Mason ?” Mr. Evelyn asked : “ you were so very healthy all the time you were here.”

Mr. Mason only smiled.

“ Did you get Major Vandeleur’s first letter ?” asked Gertrude.

“ I did,” he replied ; and no one cared to inquire further the cause of his long illness. The old man never had loved any one else since the days of his youth.

When after some time he requested to see his beloved pupil, the meeting between them was affecting to the last degree. He entered the room shaking from head to foot, from all the cautions that had been given him not to alarm the youth. Herbert did not for some time notice his entrance ; at last Gertrude said, “ Dearest Herbert, there is your dear Mr. Mason come to see you.” He raised his eyes very slowly, a faint colour came to his cheek, and a slight movement of his lips was perceptible. Mr. Mason had to be carried from the room, and from the adjoining apartments altogether, that his sobs might not reach his pupil’s ears. He retired almost immediately to bed ; and as

the wedding was to take place early next day, Gertrude saw him no more.

Though much affected by the scene of the evening before, she rose that morning with lightened spirits at leaving her beloved brother with so kind and so anxious a friend, and flattered herself that his own exhaustion was chiefly produced by over-exertion after illness. Previous to setting out, she stole into her brother's room ; but, as he still slept, she only knelt by his side for a moment, and uttered a prayer for his safety ; then taking an affectionate farewell of her father, and repeating her cautions to Miss Wilson, she stepped into the carriage, and was borne to a scene how different from that she left behind her ! A bright and lovely early spring morning, together with a letter from her lover, put into her hands by a servant returning from the post town, thanking her in the most affectionate and grateful terms for her compliance, served to cheer and enliven her, and

she arrived at Lord Foxhill's mansion in tolerable spirits.

The wedding took place immediately on her arrival ; and in about an hour afterwards, Lord and Lady Luscombe, Gertrude, and their respective attendants, set out for Paris.

“ I see you brought no maid, Gertrude,” said Lady Luscombe.

“ No : you know it was agreed that I should have Mrs. Whitecross as soon as you provided yourself with a French one ; so I thought it unnecessary to bring another : besides, you know, we settled I should not.”

“ Yes, but I half repent it now ; for the moment I told Whitecross that she was to go to live with *Mrs. Vandeleur*, she got into such ecstasies, that I expect very little comfort from her *en attendant*. I think she considers you her lady already ; at least, she certainly considers Vandeleur her lord.”

“ How do you mean ?”

“That she really almost worships him. I never heard one human being speak of another as she does of him.”

“You are so kind, dear Augusta, to try to lead me to chat on what you think an inspiring subject; but I promised you I should exert myself, and I assure you I feel much better, much less miserable, already, than I should have thought possible; so choose some topic in which Lord Luscombe can join,” (and she smiled across to him,) “and you shall see how well I shall behave.”

“Come, then, my lord, do tell us some of the sights you have seen in your wanderings over the world,” said his bride.

“I am too much charmed with the sight before me, to think of looking back.”

“Oh, but as it would not be very pretty in us to return the compliment, pray have pity on us.”

“I should then rather you would look forward than back.”

“Still,” said she, affecting to stretch her head forwards towards the opposite seat, where Lord Luscombe sat with his back to the horses, “still I can see but the one object, your lordship.”

“And is that not enough, Augusta?”

“Why, really now that is the most conceited, or else the most ill-bred, speech I ever heard. Either it is addressed to Miss Evelyn as well as me, in which case it is conceited; or else you have entirely forgotten that her eyes may require refreshment while your own are feasting so luxuriously, which is very ill-bred.”

“I believe I had best leave this whimsical girl to you, Miss Evelyn,” said Lord Luscombe, smiling; “I seldom can make anything of her.”

In such sort of conversation, if conversation it may be called, the time passed over. Lord and Lady Luscombe, though both well-meaning, and “fair to pass” as to intellect, were neither of them gifted with real talents for conversation. Lady Luscombe could always rattle on upon whatever was passing before her at the moment,

but seldom had the power of deeply engaging the attention; and Lord Luscombe, on the contrary, though a man of the world, had just enough of tact to *describe well* most of what he had seen as *sights*, but never had attained to deducing a single new idea from them; and as at this moment his thoughts were, as he said himself, more engaged upon the present than the past, he was not particularly entertaining to his companions.

Still the time did pass on, and they arrived without accident, or annoyance, in what was then, and for many years afterwards, considered the gayest city in Europe.

CHAPTER X.

On Apathy's cold brink,
To seize the soul, and teach it how to think ;
To tell of Nature's wonders, till the lot
Of self, with all its mimic care's forgot ;
And new creations open on the soul,
With bursts of joy beyond this world's control ;
Till the freed spirit, purified, refined,
Leaves puny woes and discontent behind,
To seek at last the goal they cannot reach :—
This is the true morality to teach.

ANONYMOUS.

IN Paris, as it was at that period, what a completely new view of life presented itself to Gertrude ! who, until launched at once with her gay friend into the gayest circles, composed of visiters from almost every civilized nation in the world, had scarcely ever wandered beyond the precincts of her own domain.

Lord Luscombe had visited Paris once before in an official character, which, with other circumstances, ensured his party being received at once into the very first circles even of foreign society. And certainly nothing could be more interesting to every class of intellect than the society then to be enjoyed in Paris. For the gay, there were unusual excitement and variety ; for the contemplative, there was a panorama of events, such as one lifetime could never hope to comprise again ; for the philosopher, there was food for study in the impulses which had brought about such mighty changes ; for the old, there was the hope of peace—for the young, the hope of war ; but no class, no sex, no age, was left in a state of dull stagnation. And between the *tours de valse*s, the deepest subjects of political interests were discussed by lips that until then had only opened to pronounce upon a ballet or an opera : people's minds were kept on the stretch in the gayest coterie ; and this is the real charm of society.

For the first few days Gertrude moved about sad and pensive ; she was terrified and grieved to find herself so far from Herbert, and—from Vandeleur. But, of all human beings, hers was the nature least calculated to resist the influence of pleasure and excitement. It happened that, amongst the accomplishments upon which Gertrude's mother had prided herself, was that of speaking French fluently,—an accomplishment then less a matter of course than it is at present. This she had in her first days of industry imparted to her children ; and the habit of speaking to them in that language once acquired, she had never totally abandoned, especially with her daughter. The consequence was, that though still far from speaking the language correctly or elegantly, Gertrude found herself at as little loss to understand, or make herself understood, in Paris, as most English women did who visited it at that time. In addition to the facility this acquirement afforded her of forming acquaintances, and enjoying the

society of foreigners, several of Lord Luscombe's friends were amongst those who had for many years found refuge in England from the distractions of their own country, and who had, while there, received hospitality and kindness from his family ;—good offices which were by many forgotten, but which by many also were warmly remembered, and repaid as far as circumstances admitted. Altogether Gertrude was as favourably placed for enjoying all that is supposed to constitute enjoyment to the youthful mind, as external matters could ensure.

Nor did she remain insensible to their cheering influence. By degrees her courage and her spirits recovered their tone ; her father was careful to write no depressing accounts of Herbert ; and by the time that Lord Luscombe's party had been a fortnight or three weeks in Paris, Gertrude found herself an object of universal attention and admiration in the circles in which they moved, and had even found it ne-

cessary, with a blushing cheek, to request of Lady Luscombe to suffer her engagement with Vandeleur to be generally understood. This precaution, seconded by her own delicate and retiring manners, had the effect of freeing her from several professed admirers, especially amongst her own countrymen; and, without this unwholesome food for female vanity, there still remained plenty to interest and delight her.

It has been said that Gertrude's education (as it is called) had been rather desultory, and such as her natural aversion from study or sedentary habits left very imperfect: but that very dislike to study, when joined to, and proceeding from, eagerness and vivacity of mind and perception, as it did in her, rendered her the more susceptible of, and delighted with, whatever information or new ideas she could acquire independent of that study. At Beauton this enjoyment was almost denied her,—indeed was one of which she scarcely knew

the existence ; but when launched into the enlightened, *spirituel* circles of Parisian life, where the mysteries of nature were turned into children's toys, and the *bourgeois* who sold them could lecture on their properties, she really began to feel as if she had only then begun to live. Yet far was this feeling from bringing any coolness in her faithful heart to those she had loved and left ; the only effect it produced towards them, was to make her wonder how they could so much have loved one so far beneath them ; and she determined, during her short excursion, like the bee, to gather all the treasure that she could from every one who was willing to impart it, and carry it all faithfully home to her own hive.

It will readily be conceived that this vivacity of mind, and intelligent delight in everything she saw, were, in so young and so lovely a girl, beheld by liberal, polished, and enlightened persons with interest and indulgence ; and many a gentleman, whose gallantries and personal

compliments she had effectually repressed, passed a delightful evening in describing to her the principles of some ingenious toy, or showing her some beautiful chemical experiment.

The effect of all this on her mind was inconceivable to those who from their earlier years have been familiar with such intellectual enjoyments; it was delicious—it was intoxicating. Her ideas of the powers of the human mind became exalted, and, with the enthusiasm of youth and inexperience, she could scarcely be persuaded, that where so many wonders had been discovered, all should not in time become so; and to the question, “Why should they not?” it was not in the power, still less was it the interest, of those who excited these emotions, to reply.

Much that they taught her was true and valuable, but many unproved theories were also presented to her; and her principles of cultivation, if we may be allowed the expression, were not sufficiently matured to distinguish between

them, where all was received on trust by her; and, alas! she had no friend at hand to guide her through the dangerous, because dazzling, paths of scientific speculation. To Lord and Lady Luscombe, indeed, she sometimes mentioned her new field of enjoyment; but they, though politely attentive to what she said, were too prudent to hazard an opinion where they had never had an idea, and only rejoiced that she had found anything so fully to absorb her attention.

Amongst the persons of the French *noblesse* who had received attentions from the family of Lord Luscombe in England, was the Count De l'Espoir, an ancient and respectable nobleman, but who had fallen under the displeasure of the demons of the Revolution, and who had suffered so severely, that while in exile in England, and reduced in many instances to what he considered degradation, he affected the incognito, and assumed the name of De Brons. He had returned to his country and gleaned up the remains

of his property; and though he was now no more, his only son procured an introduction to Lord Luscombe's house, under the pretext of returning thanks for the civility his family had received when in England. He was that same De Brons, now the Count De l'Espoir, from whose snares Vandeleur had rescued the present Mrs. Whitecross when Sally Henshawe.

In very early youth young De l'Espoir had evinced talents of no ordinary class; and as his father was anxious to afford him every advantage for cultivating them, he procured, as his tutor, a young German student, who had come to Paris on a visit to a sister of his married there: but who, liking the gaieties of that city, and its stirring interests, better than the life he led in his own country-home, decided upon remaining there; and in order to enable himself to do so, found it necessary to draw largely on his own talents to procure the means.

Nature had by no means been niggardly to Edelstein: he was born without any dangerous

or leading passion, and with a fair proportion of the ingenuity and talent of his country; but circumstances had been unfavourable to him. He came to Paris a young and inexperienced man, if not in love with virtue, certainly unused to vice: but such, at that period, was the state of society there, that to look on, and be able to snatch what was good from such a furnace of evil, and not perish in the attempt, required a firmer character and more settled principles than were those of the young German student. He explored the depths of human nature indeed, but without the safety-lamp of true philosophy; and though he perished not, he fell into that moral lethargy from the effects of which he never afterwards recovered. He succeeded, however, in snatching some glittering particles from the mine; and though mingled with much dross, and earthy impurities, they yet shone sufficiently to enable him, after some time, to offer himself as the instructor of youth.

Fate threw him in the way of the Count De l'Espoir, who engaged him for his only son, then a boy about twelve years of age. Very soon after this arrangement was made, the Revolution broke out ; and when it became necessary for the count to fly from that country and carry his son with him, Edelstein having little inducement to remain behind, and being very greedy in the pursuit of novelty, implored permission to follow his fortunes.

They came to England, and the Count De l'Espoir was but too happy to accept of such hospitality as his rank, and unmerited misfortunes, procured him from the English, on his own behalf, and to place his son at a school where he might still pursue his education. The German tutor was separated from his patron for a time, and after continuing for about two years to procure a precarious livelihood by his talents, he determined upon taking orders, as a means of increasing his respectability ; and with some difficulty got himself ordained by an ex-bishop

of France, at the instance of the Count De l'Espoir.

It is not to be supposed that such motives, and followed by no active duties, could produce much influence upon his character ; or, without more interest than he possessed, upon his worldly fortunes ; he continued, therefore, the same unsteady, wild, and fanciful creature he had ever been, trifling with the deepest mysteries of nature, and only sipping enough of each to render them dangerous to himself and others, until after a few years, the course of events placed him as an usher at the same school in ——shire where young De l'Espoir now was, in the sort of intermediate position between pupil and teacher : that is, the terms of education were lowered in his favour, on account of the purity and correctness of his French accent.

Hitherto De l'Espoir, at the different schools he had been at, had passed as a sort of character, whom, if nobody praised, every one

seemed afraid to blame. An odd, startling sort of daringness now and then broke out in his sentiments, and even in his conduct ; but as he quickly was able to restrain the one, and to turn the other off in a satirical laugh, people were willing to pass him by as—a Frenchman.

When, however, Edelstein appeared at Mr. Hamilton's school, the scene was changed. The long-smothered fire broke out under the sanction of a coadjutor ; and the German and the Frenchman, though very unlike in natural disposition, thus meeting in a foreign land, became linked in bonds of friendship far beyond those necessarily attendant on their former acquaintance. Nothing, indeed, could be more opposite than were the characters of the two young men. It might almost have been supposed that they had each been changed at their birth ; for while the German was animated, volatile, and unsteady, the Frenchman was deep, reflective, cool, and designing. But as if each, by myste-

rious sympathy, recognised his own proper nature in the other, they became firmest friends; and this fatal friendship gave the last puff to the already waning lamp of Hans Edelstein's principles.

De l'Espoir had deeply felt his family's fall; but he felt it only in their loss of wealth as the means of enjoyment, and his earliest thoughts turned to the possibility of supplying that want. While yet in his boyhood, he had sounded several of the companions whom chance threw in his way upon these means; but the plain and plodding honesty of John Bull, and the happy circumstances of English youth, rendered them alike unable and unwilling to understand or to second his schemes. For a time he suffered those visions to slumber, or was forced to conceal them within his own breast, and endeavoured to make himself amends by such amusements as were within his reach. But no sooner did his German tutor re-appear, than he found in him a spirit ready to minister to whatever

devices his still young but dangerous ambition should suggest. The circumstances of the times, and their own absolute poverty and want of friends in a foreign country, rendered political intrigue totally out of their reach ; but they turned all their attention to making some such figure in the occult sciences, so little practised in England at that time, and in which the German was an adept, as should, in the first instance, procure them some money, for the right use of which they determined to trust to circumstances.

Matters were just at this pass between them, when chance introduced young Vandeleur to the notice of the Marquis of Hampton. His account of the foreigners had sufficient weight with that nobleman to induce him to write to Mr. Hamilton on the subject. The consequence was a strict investigation, and prohibition of all studies that were not submitted to his inspection. This for a short time seemed to produce the desired cessation ; but

before any more permanent effects could ensue from it, that political period arrived which enabled the Count De l'Espoir and his son to return to their native country.

They did return ; but not so did their ancient possessions return to them : and young De l'Espoir, with deep and bitter discontent, saw himself so confined in his means, as to have little more enjoyment in his power than when, half tutor, half pupil at Mr. Hamilton's school, he endeavoured to subvert the principles of a beautiful and innocent girl. Once more he turned his dark mind to its own resources, and instead of pursuing the broad and noble path of science, which might have led him to wealth, and certainly to honour, he wrote to his *ci-devant* tutor to rejoin him, and together they recommenced, in a city the most favourable to their wild and secret practices, their endeavours to win by trick, device, and experiment, from the ignorant and the credulous, that notoriety and emolument which, with a little more time and

study, they might have commanded, by the force of truth and the power of knowledge, from the highest and the noblest.

For some time their machinations served little other purpose than to afford them amusement and the means of low intrigue. But at length, and suddenly, an accident occurred ; a report was spread : a life fell the sacrifice to some mysterious chemical experiment which, professing to bestow immortality, only kept the pledge by dismissing the spirit from its mortal tabernacle. There were some dark attending circumstances about a will, and the matter called for legal investigation. De l'Espoir had friends in power, and was still a young man. Edelstein was declared the criminal, and fled once more from Paris for his life. This fearful event, which took place a few years before Gertrude visited Paris, acted as a temporary sedative upon De l'Espoir—on his father as a lasting one. The old man sank beneath the shock ; and the young count contrived to cover, by his new title, the blot

upon his name. He had now grown wiser by experience, and the visions of youth having faded before added years, he determined to turn from theory to practice, from mind to matter; and when the peace with England sent its loveliest and its wealthiest flocking to Paris, he began to recollect its "smiling homes," and to think that, as he was a remarkably handsome man and still in the prime of life, he could not do better than give his title in exchange for some of their fertile acres. Fortune hitherto had been unfavourable to him; for besides that his own possessions were by no means so ample as to induce any parent to covet his alliance, his was not a character to win the love of woman; there was too much of cold, selfish, worldly calculation about it. He was one of those persons who contrive to hold their place in society despite a certain instinct which prevails amongst men to their disadvantage, and to be well received by women, but never to be an object of their love.

He was without principles; but, as he was also without ardent feelings, he was never hurried by their impulse into any flagrant vice; and, taught caution by added years and unsuccessful youth, he now was rather one who looked steadily forward to the time when some happy hit should enable him to indulge his passions or propensities without control, than one who yielded headlong to their impulse, perhaps to be as quickly arrested by some mercifully counter-acting feeling. He played, but it was still with the same cold caution that marked his whole demeanour: he neither lost his money nor his character—the one was nearly as precious to him as the other. Not that he was a miser; on the contrary, he merely valued money as the instrument of his pleasures—his passport into good society—and his character—for the same reason!

Such was the man who, on plea of the civilities which his father had received from the family of Lord Luscombe, got himself intro-

duced to the young, innocent, and inexperienced Gertrude. He, like the rest, had heard of her engagement ; but as, at the same time, he also heard of her large fortune, and that only a sickly youth, her very affectionate brother, stood between her and a princely one, he did not, like others, resign his boldest hopes. What to better-principled minds seemed an insurmountable barrier between her and them, to him only appeared to reduce his competitors or rivals from infinity to *one*.

“*Sauve qui peut !*” cried he. “Scared by the phantom of a woman’s faith, the field will be all the clearer for me.”

He inquired if her *fiancé* were in Paris ; and on learning that he was not, he considered the field already won.

A more modest man might also have been staggered by witnessing, as he did, Gertrude’s quiet but decided rejection of all personal adulation, from whatever source presented ; and her innocent assumption of matronly dignity, when

not thrown off her guard by her youthful and enthusiastic feelings : but it produced no other effect on him, than to show him that the usual avenue to women's hearts was closed up with her, and that therefore he must make another for himself.

It is not to be supposed that one so deeply interested, should long remain ignorant of the delight which the poor girl took in literary conversation ; and Paris itself scarcely afforded a person more perfectly qualified to catch and entrance the attention of one at once so intelligent, and so uncultivated, as Gertrude was. His own daringness of fancy,—want of loyalty, as it were, in the cause of science,—and the innumerable theories of which he had tasted in his youth, gave him weapons with which to assail her imagination, as bright, and various, as they were subtle and dangerous.

The road to her attention thus once discovered, he determined to shut it up from all competitors ; and in the evening *conversazione*

in the gardens of the Tuileries, the ride in the Bois de Boulogne, or the enchanting lounge of the Louvre, he was ever at her side, and ever pouring into her ear some interesting or amusing fact or theory. Still she dreamt not of danger or imprudence. Vandeleur and De l'Espoir were beings so unlike, that by any accident they had never yet even crossed each other in her mind. Nor was De l'Espoir unaware of this. The stake for which he played was too deep not to render him quick-sighted; and when another fortnight passed over, and he found that he had not made the slightest advance in her affections, or even interested her vanity, he perceived that he must either change his plans, or be content to find himself a mere benevolent, disinterested instructor to a beautiful young girl. The character neither pleased nor suited him; and, albeit he was not used either to despond, or quickly to abandon any scheme he had once adopted, he was for some days absolutely at a loss on what point to assail her with the remotest prospect or even chance of success. A

mere accidental circumstance revealed to him that point.

It happened that, one evening at a gentleman's house, where there were but few persons assembled, Gertrude, looking over the few books and pamphlets that lay scattered about, took up a report upon the effects of ANIMAL MAGNETISM. She had heard some odd rumours in England of something of the kind, but always heard it spoken of with the greatest contempt and derision : even Vandeleur, she remembered, had joined in the laugh, and pronounced it nothing but French or German humbug. This, of course, did not tend to excite her interest in the subject, and it had probably never again crossed her imagination until chance threw in her way this publication ; but then, great indeed was her astonishment to perceive, signed to it, one or two names of the leading medical men of the day, and whose talents and high acquirements she had heard both English and French alike extol.

“What in the world is this?” said she, pointing it out to De l’Espoir, who, as usual, was hovering about her. He received the pamphlet from her hand, looked at it for a moment, and before he found words to reply to her fate-teeming question, he felt an instinctive conviction that she had at last herself pointed out to him the snare in which alone she could be caught.

De l’Espoir had been for years in England; he was of course aware of the prejudices that even a few years ago existed much more strongly than they do now, against almost everything French, but especially against what was called French quackery, and French philosophy.

Happily those prejudices are fading away: the word *French* no longer is synonymous with *false*; and people at last have learned to try a medicine, a doctrine, or a theory, by some other test than that of French and English. But they did exist, and perhaps never in greater force than when De l’Espoir was receiving

or imparting instruction there. Indeed, he had suffered from them himself: for even before the Marquis of Hampton had taken the trouble of making Mr. Hamilton aware of the dangerous inmates he harboured amongst his pupils, De l'Espoir found himself looked upon with an eye of suspicion by the pupils, and even shunned and dreaded as some one possessed of unhallowed powers. This, of course, he remembered still, and was well aware of the caution that would be necessary, in order not to scare away the timid stranger-bird, that now came fluttering round the dangerous snare to examine its contents.

Before he made up his mind in what way to answer her, she had run her eye over another, and another, startling instance of the cures effected, or said to be effected, by the power of the human will, and sympathies, over the energies of another. She was confounded, and again exclaimed, "Do explain to me, if you can, what all this means, signed by G—— and

D——, &c. &c. names that are esteemed alike by us and you, on a subject which I thought only tolerated by fools or madmen? But perhaps it is not one with which you are even acquainted?”

The count smiled gently, and looked down. “I believe,” he said at last, “it is scarcely too much to say, that few are better acquainted with it.”

And it was true. It was one of those theories which in his youth had engaged much of his attention; and if it had not led to cures for others, had led to many a wild adventure for himself. It had of late been laid aside, with other pursuits unbecoming his new rank and station in society, and indeed was only practised now, by any one in Paris, in secrecy and obscurity: still, now and then, such startling effects did take place, and such wonderful cures were occasionally effected through its medium, from whatever cause, that some liberal-minded physicians could not refuse their testimony to the facts;

while one or two men, whose extensive talents and research were patents in themselves, even ventured to write in favour of the theory.

By degrees, and with a skill worthy of a better cause, De l'Espoir put Gertrude in possession of these circumstances; and when he saw, through her liquid eyes, the holy hope that was kindling up in her enthusiastic soul, as he adroitly and delicately drew her attention to its influence in all nervous cases, or affections of the head, her own heart did not bound more tumultuously at the thought of its being serviceable to her beloved brother, than did his at seeing how insensibly she was suffering herself to be at least made accustomed to the ideas he wished to instil into her mind. It was all he aimed at for the present; and, changing the conversation that she might not be able to suspect his object in it, he determined to wait with patience until she should again lead to it herself.

Alas! it was not long before she did so: the hints he had thrown out, the facts he had re-

lated, were to her of a nature too deeply interesting to leave them unexamined. He of course followed as she led, and even, when he could do so with effect, took a stride before her; and though she never yet had spoken to him of her brother's health, he plainly perceived that every question, every idea, and every throb of her heart had but the one object. He waited with palpitating anxiety, but at the same time with consummate art and caution, until she should make it known to him herself; while beforehand he made it his business, by every indirect means within his reach, to put himself in full possession of every particular relating to the boy's malady, and to the general circumstances of the family. This enabled him constantly to give such a turn, and such a colour, to every instance he related of the effects of animal magnetism, as exalted the poor girl's enthusiastic hopes to the highest; and at last, one day, with a blushing countenance, and eyes humid, from the excess of her emotion, and the

delicacy of the communication, she informed him of the state in which her brother languished, and of the hope that had sprung up within her heart.

De l'Espoir received her communication with all the skilful tact of one, at once deeply interested, and prepared beforehand for it. He seemed at first scarcely to encourage her in thinking of the undertaking; but, with the difficulties and the obstacles which he pointed out, he managed to blend so artfully the certainty of success if they could but be surmounted, that he fully succeeded, even to his own satisfaction, in fixing, instead of removing, her anxiety to try it.

Still there were moments when her clear understanding, unformed and immatured as it was, suggested to her the improbability that any art, science, power, or whatever its nature might be, so beneficial in its effects on human beings, should remain so long, at the least, a matter of doubt, if not of ridicule, to almost all

the enlightened part of mankind. But what is the theory so extravagant that may not, by clever and interested casuists, be surrounded with arguments to dazzle and bewilder, if not for the moment to win over to its side, the youthful mind, to which every new idea is almost alike wonderful and extraordinary? And how long is it before the young and vigorous intellect is convinced that its own powers are not creative ! or can believe, where so much is taken on trust, that any one has ascertained where the limits should be laid !

In the present expanding state of Gertrude's faculties and ideas, she was particularly exposed to this danger ; for she really felt it to be almost presumption in her, to attempt to question the probability of any theory, merely by the force of her own weak powers of reasoning or comprehension.

In the principles of animal magnetism there was everything to enlist the gentle, and the feeling, on its side ; its ostensible, and indeed

only legitimate object, being to alleviate the ills of humanity by curing diseases which may be beyond the physician's skill. And, as it professes to require virtue, and purity of mind, in its agents, there was nothing revolting to delicacy in its practice : whilst a theory that brought with it, in Gertrude's case, so holy, so delicious a hope as that now awakened within her, was of all others the least likely to be rejected by her ardent and affectionate heart.

“ Can it be, oh ! can it be ! ” she exclaimed, “ that God has heard my prayers, and sent me here for the purpose of making *me*—even me—the instrument of his mercy to my beloved Herbert ! ”

She blushed, however, very deeply when De l'Espoir proceeded to explain to her the absolute necessity that she should, in so critical a case, have some one by her side, well skilled in the practice of magnetising, in order to direct her movements, and sustain her nerves in case of any sudden emergency.

“ Then it is indeed at an end !” said she, “ for such a person is not to be found in England ; and in vain should I endeavour to prevail on my father to bring Herbert here, on what he would indeed call a wild-goose chase.”

“ But know you not that Frenchmen can cross the seas as well as Englishmen ?” inquired De l’Espoir, smiling.

“ Yes : but to whom could I turn for such a sacrifice of time and trouble ?” she asked, hastily raising her eyes to his face, but as hastily dropping them when she read his countenance, although her artless lips could scarcely refrain from reflecting the smile she caught on his, and thus betraying the consciousness of his intentions, which only that instant flashed upon her mind. He seized her hand, pressed it between both his, and exclaimed in a voice of unfeigned transport, “ To me—to me, Gertrude, may you turn for it !—I shall follow you to England—I shall assist you in your pious undertaking. You will need con-

stant advice and support ; I shall be at hand to afford it ; and—my only reward shall be—a place in that angelic heart !”

Gertrude started at this finale to his speech ; and, with a burning blush and downcast eyes, asked him in a voice almost inaudible, if he knew not of her engagement ?

Few mistake the symptoms of genuine truth. De l'Espoir felt that he had touched the very verge of the precipice that, in another moment, had engulphed his dearest hopes. He recovered himself at once, and skilfully retreated. “ I do !” he said emphatically. “ I have long known it : else where had been my security ?—I ask but for the lowest place to which a sincere friend may aspire.”

The youthful girl, too early assuming the character of a matron, unsupported and unassisted, again blushed at what she now believed to have been only her own vanity ; and reassured at once both of his propriety and extraordinary kindness, she not only accepted his proposal, but

poured upon him the most enthusiastic expressions of gratitude and delight. De l'Espoir was not yet quite unembarrassed : he saw that Gertrude had not taken into consideration a point upon which all his chance of success must hinge—that of absolute concealment of the whole proceeding from every human being except themselves and the poor invalid, who was of course incapable of betraying them.

The Count was by far too much a man of the world, and knew too much of England, to share in Gertrude's hope of the arguments that prevailed with herself having any effect on her plain, downright, John Bull father ; or even if a parent's despairing anxiety for the recovery of an only son, should induce him to try everything, or anything, that held out a hope of success, still De l'Espoir well knew that neither his own worldly advantages, nor the interest he had been able, with all his pains, to awaken in Gertrude's breast, afforded the smallest chance of his superseding Vandeleur, either

with her family or herself ; and that, therefore, even should the boy recover, he must content himself with abundance of thanks, and expressions of gratitude ; and — should he not, why the matter were still worse. Neither of these alternatives answered his purpose, and nothing remained for him but to follow Gertrude to England privately, but with her own concurrence ; to secrete himself in the neighbourhood of her home ; to bring about clandestine meetings with her ; and, finally, to entangle her so completely in his meshes, that even her family should no longer wish to oppose her marriage with one with whom her character was so deeply compromised.

Nor, in planning thus, did De l'Espoir consider that he was betraying an innocent and lovely being into perpetual misery, through the medium of her best affections. Perhaps, if he had, he might have hesitated, if not desisted altogether. But if the idea ever obtruded itself upon him, he banished it with the idle and

imbecile tirade upon woman's fickleness and want of character ; and while really determining to do all that was " reasonable " to make Gertrude happy as his wife, he persuaded himself that her fidelity to Major Vandeleur, and absolute indifference to admiration from any other man, was like the obedience of the powerful brute creation to the will of man, which proceeds merely from their ignorance of their own capability to resist. Her engagement once forcibly broken,—perhaps, if matters were well managed, by Vandeleur himself,—he flattered himself that her young, gentle, and loving heart would turn its feelings all on him, from the self-same docility and sense of duty.

Alas! how seldom men can correctly read the secrets of a woman's heart, there to learn how much of all that gentleness and docility which they see, has been born of love itself!

Of De l'Espoir's intended tampering with the unfortunate invalid himself, it is much more difficult to speak. There is but One can search

the human heart through all its secret windings; and that I am myself at this moment ignorant of how much or how little faith De l'Espoir really placed on the influence of animal magnetism, is perhaps the best defence that can be offered of what ensued from his machinations.

Indeed, his mind was of that satirical, half-light and half-sombre cast, that it was scarcely possible ever to pronounce on what he did or did not believe, and it was very doubtful if he knew himself. He had long rejected all guidance from the lamp of others; and with too little steadiness, warmth, or desire after truth, to trim his own with diligence, he went groping about in a sort of twilight state of mind, touching and feeling everything, without taking time or pains to assure himself of any, and not unfrequently obscuring the way to others.

In his youth he had certainly not only thought of, but practised, animal magnetism, under the inspirations of his German tutor; and unless

he had bribed two or three respectable-looking persons, whom he contrived to bring before Gertrude in her walks, he had succeeded in performing some extraordinary cures. Of the failures, it was not his cue to speak ; and for his abandoning a practice so fraught with charity and good-will, he gave as a reason, the prejudices of the world, “ which would not be saved ;” and hinted that, for aught Gertrude could tell, he still might practise it in secret.

In secret indeed it must have been ; for, from the first conversation they had held upon the subject, he had made it a request that she should not use his name in speaking of it, as her doing so would expose him, he said, to imbecile ridicule. This of course she neither felt the right nor the inclination to refuse ; and the subject having first been presented to her as one held in derision by almost all, she was not startled to find it was so, by many.

In endeavouring to dive into De l’Espoir’s

real feelings on the present occasion, it must be confessed that the thought sometimes did cross him, that if Gertrude's brother were out of the way, or even if his imbecility were to become confirmed, she would be a prize worthy of the aspirations of his country's highest nobles. But Nature holds no monster capable of making the fondly-attached sister the instrument of destroying her brother, through the medium of her very love. No, no; he persuaded himself that the trial would at least prove a harmless one with respect to him. If indeed he should succeed, why then Gertrude, with the fortune that was already settled upon her, were a prize well worthy of his efforts, even without the influence which he might fairly calculate upon obtaining over her brother's mind; and if he failed, why he had intended well, and the entire property was entailed upon Gertrude. That the matter would require some careful and adroit management he was well aware; but such he considered his forte: and against any risk from the indig-

nation or revenge of her family and lover, he felt he had an invulnerable shield in her own character, so deeply and doubly involved. How far he could be considered justifiable in attempting the trial under such circumstances, I leave to the believers in animal magnetism to determine, who maintain that the most perfect purity of heart and singleness of intention are necessary for the well-being of the patient.

CHAPTER XI.

“ Such were the deep-drawn mysteries,
And some perhaps even more profound,
More ’wilderer to the mind than these,
Which, far as woman’s thought could sound,
Or a fall’n, outlaw’d spirit reach,
She dared to learn, and I to teach,
Till, fill’d with such unearthly lore,
And mingling the pure light it brings
With much that fancy had before
Shed in false-tinted glimmerings,
The enthusiast girl spoke out.”

THE Count De l’Espoir, though devoid of the warm feelings and affections which are commonly supposed to afford the surest road to the knowledge of our species, through the medium of our sympathies, had yet mingled in too many exciting scenes, not to have acquired enough of that knowledge to enable him to see that the deep involve-

ment of Gertrude's character in its most delicate points, which his scheme required, was precisely what would cause it to be at once rejected by an older, a more experienced, or, alas ! a more prudent person than her with whom he had to deal. Even had her chaperon in Paris been one whose mind and manners gave her more influence over Gertrude, his task had been more difficult ; but while Lady Luscombe, gay and good-humoured, plunged headlong into all the gaieties presented to her, and laughed and chatted with every one, about everything, she left her friend unmolested, and unquestioned, upon the subject of her deeper studies.

In her letters to Vandeleur, Gertrude had described the pleasure she enjoyed in the development of her mind, and the delight with which she looked forward to his finding her improved in companionable qualities, and subjects for conversation, when, as she playfully added, the only one they had tried as yet, should be exhausted. But, as that was not yet the case,

she deferred all discussion of the new subjects that interested her, until then ; and did not for a moment think of giving herself the trouble of writing, or him of reading, the names of her acquaintances, which, she concluded, must be utterly uninteresting to him ; or if by any chance she might have mentioned the Count De l'Espoir, the name would not have been recognised by him. This deprived him of the opportunity of doing more than giving her some general cautions, which she, in her inexperience, did not know how to apply ; and he was himself too much rejoiced at her rational manner of spending her time, and at perceiving that her interest in life was evidently returning, to be very anxious to throw a damp upon her pursuits, especially as every letter of hers breathed undiminished affection and confidence in him. For the propriety and eligibility of her acquaintances he trusted alike to her own purity of mind, and to Lord Luscombe's position in society.

In fact, the latter did, once or twice, remark

to his lady the constant attendance of the Count De l'Espoir upon their young *protégée*, and she laughingly repeated it to Gertrude: but the unfeigned amazement, the heartfelt contempt with which the latter treated the very idea of his rivalling Vandeleur in her affections, together with her open and undisguised avowal of the only link or point of attraction that existed between De l'Espoir and her, perfectly convinced her friend that she was as indifferent to the count as Vandeleur himself could desire.

“ Still,” Gertrude said, “ still, Augusta, although nothing could be more impossible than that my feelings could be, in the very remotest degree, influenced by his civilities, if there is anything the least remarkable in them, I would not receive them an hour longer.”

But Lady Luscombe assured her that on that head she need not have an apprehension, as, even were she to change her mind, the world had no right to censure; but, upon any other supposition, it would be childish and unmeaning

to deprive herself of the pleasure and improvement she professed to derive from his society ; and Lady Luscombe, for her own part, was delighted that Gertrude had found a companion who seemed to render her visit so agreeable to her.

Probably, had De l'Espoir been a more loving, or more loveable being, women would not have felt this perfect safety in his company, both for themselves and others.

Lady Luscombe and Gertrude continued to be sincerely attached friends ; but they moved now in different worlds—one in that of reality, the other in that of imagination—and they latterly had scarcely an idea in common. It was with little difficulty, therefore, that De l'Espoir prevailed upon Gertrude to promise not to subject either his name, or even this his favourite theory, to the gay badinage of her lively friend. She had, in fact, herself felt no inducement to confide the secret to her ; but when, encouraged by her ready acquiescence in this request, he

proceeded to extend the prohibition to those nearest and dearest to her, not all the maxims of worldly prudence, and suspicions of the perfidy of man, that ever were preached into the ears of youthful woman, could have brought a more vivid blush to the cheek, or a more revolting sensation to the heart, than did woman's innate feelings of propriety and love's ingenuous suggestions to the cheek and heart of Gertrude.

“It was impossible,” she said, “absolutely impossible, to keep so important a step a secret from her father;” and she blushed to explain the injury she felt she should be doing to Vandeleur's confiding affection, in thus linking herself in such close intimacy with another man, to his exclusion.

De l'Espoir felt his airy castles tottering a second time; but, too good a tactician to combat her feelings in their first force, he contented himself with bowing in seeming acquiescence, and expressed his regret that all was indeed then at an end. In his own mind, however, he

rejoiced to find that her scruples lay in her own natural and affectionate feelings, rather than in the cold, acquired cautions of the world's wisdom, and prescribed rules of propriety ; for he judged that it would be much more easy to overcome the former, in one so artless and so disinterested, and for so hallowed a purpose. He judged but too truly.

“ Why at an end ? ” she asked.

“ In the first place, mademoiselle, suffer me to ask, have you any reason to hope that you could prevail on your father to allow what he considers quackery and nonsense, if not something worse, to be practised on his son in the state in which you describe him to be ? ”

“ I must hope he could be prevailed on to hear the arguments in its favour ;—at least,” she said hesitating, as the doubt of what she ventured to hope, came strongly over her, — “ at least, I am sure Major Vandeleur would.”

The reader will be at no loss to guess that the Count De l'Espoir did not relish *his* being

brought into the conclave: indeed, he thought it not a little strange that they two should come again in collision, as it were, by Gertrude as a connecting link; and perhaps in his light—dark, sarcastic mind, the pleasure of revenge, though not strong enough to have instigated him of itself to any serious undertaking, gave not a little zest to his present plan. Be this as it may, he now asked Gertrude if she had kept her promise of never mentioning his name.

“As connected with animal magnetism?” she said. “No, never; nor, indeed, I think, to Major Vandeleur at all.”

“Well, allow me to enforce on your recollection your promise not to do so; and, indeed, since you have become so much interested on the subject, do not, pray, mention my name on any subject in your letters to him, lest he might connect the circumstance with it: and on this point I confess myself particularly sensitive of ridicule,—indeed, to an extent that might pre-

vent my attempting any further services to my fellow-creatures."

"But is that right?"

"Perhaps not; *et puis*?"

"Oh, certainly—I perfectly understand you. I have no right to stop as much good as you are disposed to do, because you choose not to do all. Then I am to understand that you would not come over openly, even if my father could be prevailed upon to give his consent?"

"My dear Miss Evelyn, when I first made you the offer, I confess that the idea of exposing myself to public ridicule did not occur to me; and of course, then, that was not taken into contemplation: yet I do not hesitate to say, that were there no other possible means to effect this most interesting cure, I should sacrifice everything to try it."

"But if you are so sure of succeeding, what ridicule could attach to it?"

"I am not sure of succeeding: I am only

sure of this, that as far as either my judgment or experience can go, it seems a case particularly calculated for the influence of the *will*, and the diffusion of the *magnetic fluid* to be exerted with the most beneficial results. I should therefore feel it sinful not to try it at any sacrifice of mere conventional rules."

"Yes; but it is the conventional rules I wish you *not* to break through."

"True," said De l'Espoir, affecting to correct himself for this mistake, which he had purposely committed to show Gertrude her own case; "True; I should have said, of any worldly or selfish feelings; but the simple fact is, that this very publicity would in all probability defeat the object altogether; and that is really my standing objection."

He then proceeded to inform her, that the most perfect unity of mind, and faith, and will, are necessary in those deeply interested in a case of magnetising: that too great anxiety, the slightest doubt, or even any wandering

thoughts of any single person present during the time of operation, may be most injurious to the patient ; and, in short, that his conscience would not permit him to make the trial where people were concerned so likely to disturb its course as her friends, whose minds could not possibly be brought into the necessary state.

“ No, mademoiselle,” he added, playfully taking her hand ; “ if you will yourself sacrifice nothing, the sacrifice of my feelings alone will not do, else believe me it should be made.”

“ Oh ! God knows how readily I should sacrifice my life could it restore my dearest Herbert to what he was !” she exclaimed. “ But there is something in this undertaking so awful—so mysterious: and besides,” she said, with the most natural and most salutary feeling that a woman can encourage—“ and besides, I do not think that anything can be right in itself, that calls for concealment from our nearest and dearest friends, those most interested in our welfare.”

“ That is, supposing the world to be in a state of perfection,” observed the count.

“ No : how ? ”

“ Because, if not, there must ever be erroneous judgments and opinions upon every subject ; and the only way the wise and good can correct them, is by acting by the rest who are not so, as parents do by children ; that is, by concealing the salutary medicine, that they may be forced to profit by it.”

“ But I—I, so young a girl, surely am not the one who should take upon myself to set established rules at defiance upon my own superior judgment ? ”

De l'Espoir smiled meaningly, and looked down with a look that would have become a blush, had one been at his beck. After a moment's pause, he said, “ No, perhaps not ; but pardon me if I say, that you would not be acting altogether on your own judgment.”

“ Oh ! I perceive,” exclaimed Gertrude, her playful spirit irresistibly caught by the modestly

ridiculous dilemma into which the count had betrayed himself,—“ I perceive, *you*, Monsieur le Comte, are the wise and good ; *my* friends and family are the silly children ; and *I* am (or ought to be) your most obedient humble servant.”

“ At least, you are ever charming,” he exclaimed hastily ; “ and if you cannot convince my judgment against my life’s experience, you can at least win or command my silence. So let us drop the subject for ever, after one little word more in self-defence. I do not set myself up in opposition to your family ; I have not the happiness of knowing them : I only proposed a temporary concealment from them of a medicine, I may call it, which you own they are prejudiced against, until the accomplishment of an object dear alike to them and you ; at which time you were not only at liberty to reveal the whole, but poor *I*, should even look forward to your doing so, as the only means of my being permitted to continue an acquaintance

become so valuable to me. You are as well aware as I am, that their prejudices, were there no other objections to the premature disclosure, would totally defeat our plans."

"It is too true," said poor Gertrude, in a cruel state of perplexity. "And beloved Herbert! But am I quite sure that their objections to, or contempt of, this theory are not well founded? May it not be I who am mistaken?"

"It is not for me, who profess the theory, to decide that question," answered De l'Espoir, with a quiet dignity which spoke much at least for his own belief in it; "and if you think that they have impartially studied the subject, and are, on conviction, satisfied of its absurdity, perhaps you would be wrong in preferring your own judgment, or mine, before theirs. But if, on the contrary, you believe that they have merely heard of it, if at all, as one of the wild visions of a detested, because long a rival nation, and have never seen a trial, or listened to an argu-

ment in its favour, will you inform me what science might not be rejected on the same grounds? Remember that Galileo was persecuted and imprisoned by the most enlightened nation then in existence, for broaching the doctrine of the sun not moving round the earth."

Gertrude sighed deeply; she felt unable to refute the casuistry of the count, and her whole soul was bent upon making the experiment on her brother: while the selfish point of view in which De l'Espoir artfully placed her scruples, was not without its effect on her generous nature.

After a minute's silence, which De l'Espoir was careful not to interrupt, she said, "But could I not go through the rules myself? they appear to be extremely simple."

"For your soul's sake, attempt it not!" he exclaimed with either real or well-feigned solicitude. "The very anxiety that would rest upon your mind, after what I have said, would defeat your object. You say your brother is

much debilitated : better let him linger on even in that pitiable state, than bring on a paroxysm from which the slightest terror, or indecision, would incapacitate you from restoring him, and perhaps either loss of life, or the final overthrow of his reason, be the consequence.”

“ Oh, better indeed !” exclaimed Gertrude, turning very pale ; “ and if such consequence could ensue, the undertaking in any way appears to me a desperate, almost an impious one.”

“ It need not, under skilful directions, and, above all, with steady collected nerves. The surgeon might as well shrink from the saving operation, as you from relieving your suffering brother : much more so indeed ; for the one, in any event, subjects the patient to excruciating pain,—the other is either imperceptible, or delightful in its effects.”

“ Ah ! but,” observed Gertrude, “ the surgeon has the experience of mankind, and, still more, the evidence of his senses and reason to

guide him ; whilst the professors of animal magnetism have nothing but the assertion of unaccountable effects, founded upon the authority of a few, and, in general, obscure individuals, in opposition to the reason of the many, and the enlightened, and which even they themselves who most believe in it, do not pretend to account for.”

“ When they can account for the thoughts, which they maintain to be immaterial, producing visible and palpable effects upon substantial matter—when they can account for a movement, or a look of their own, producing an effect upon another person, which may perhaps occasion a change in that person’s destiny, not only through time but through eternity—then will I undertake to explain to them how far the whole concentrated power of the mind, with contact of the person, (for I go not the lengths some do, in saying the idle can operate at a distance), brought to bear upon one object,—as the health of a friend,—may operate to that person’s benefit or preju-

diee. I know they tell us, that, the *will* being *no body*, and denying, as they do, the existence of any such fluid as that we call *animal magnetic fluid*, or at least our power of dispensing it, it is impossible the will, or mind of one person, can affect the body of another. Why then is not the question, as to whether or not light is a body, at once set at rest for ever?—for, surely, no one will deny the effect which light produces on the body of the eye—on the materials of vegetables? But, what may appear more simple still, or what may at least seem to bear more completely on the subject, is *infection*. What is infection? Is it a body?—is it a fluid?—and how is it communicated from one person to another? When they can prove these phenomena to be better understood than what we profess by animal magnetism, then will I no longer be its votary. In fact, were I to attempt a solution of my own concerning it,—or rather, were I to attempt to account for its being so much more

uncommon in its effects than infection, I should say it was because human nature is so much more willing to part with (I will not say *to impart*) disease than with health ; and though there may be many instances in which health would willingly be divided, to save or serve a beloved object, yet our nature, our corporeal nature, ever at war with our spiritual, is averse to the effort, and acts, like most of our vital functions, almost unconsciously to us, preventing our very knowledge of the power that is within us. Were it not for this wise tenacity of nature in preserving what is essential to its own well-being, I have not a doubt but that good health would be as *infectious* as disease. But few are *capable* of the *will* to dispense it, or, in other words, to become *magnetisers*."

" Then the exertion of magnetising is injurious to those who practise it?" observed Gertrude.

" In most cases it is slightly so ; at least, if pursued too long or too frequently : but Nature

has supplied means for repairing the injury. You already know my theory, of a certain portion of everything being in the world always, unchangeably, without increase or diminution ; and that it is according as they are well or ill apportioned out, we have good or evil, health or sickness. When, therefore, a person in health of mind and body has, in order to minister to the sufferings of another, given out a portion of his own existence, ‘ there are a thousand inanimate objects at hand to return it to him—a walk in the sunshine, the exhalation of flowers or trees,’* and various other remedies as simple. At the same time, caution and moderation must be observed in this as in the use of every other gift.”

He need not have been so anxious to satisfy his present auditor that the effects on the magnetiser were not serious or permanent. The information, that the operation called perhaps for some slight sacrifice of her own

* See the various works on Animal Magnetism.

health, was so far from cooling poor Gertrude's desire of exercising it for her brother's relief, that it seemed rather to give double weight to the count's arguments, by investing her, as it were, with an individual *right* in the matter, by dispensing her own health for him : and besides, she was yet young, and ardent enough to think that the more difficult any task, the more pleasure she should have in performing it. She became more anxious than ever to make the experiment ; yet, with the oppressive feeling that the first mystery or concealment must ever bring to an ingenuous mind, she left the count with a heavy sigh, and a promise to give the matter her best consideration.

Alas ! she was but little aware how incapable she was of giving it the consideration it required, or placing it in those various lights which the many eyes of the world would reflect upon it. In the privacy of her own apartment, indeed, where she was accustomed to be, as it were, surrounded in imagination by her family

and her lover, their opinions, their feelings, and their very prejudices resumed their sway. But when again she thought of Herbert languishing out, perhaps a long life in hopeless idiocy, or at least in listless non-enjoyment; and that all which she could bring forward to console herself for so dreadful a doom to one so dear, was the reflection that she had run no risk of injuring her own character in the eyes of the world; she turned with absolute loathing from so cold, so selfish a consideration, and would, perhaps, have cast it to the winds for ever, had not the image of Vandeleur given it a weight it possessed not before. His sorrow, his disappointment, his anguish, at learning that she was capable of such imprudence, and such want of confidence in him, was not to be endured; and then, young as she was, she was fully aware how differently the matter would be viewed by the most candid, according to its failure or success. Should it succeed, she could at least appeal to their own senses for

the strength of the arguments that had prevailed with her, and displeasure at the risk she had run would be lost in the joy which it produced. But should it fail, and leave them only as they were before, she must for ever either bear the heavy burden of a secret from her husband, or submit to his thinking she had suffered herself to be unpardonably duped into a very improper step.

As her native good sense, when left to its own pure light, presented the matter to her in this point of view, she came to the determination of writing to Vandeleur upon the subject of animal magnetism; repeating some of the strongest arguments in its favour; quoting some of the certificates she had seen; and without betraying De l'Espoir, which she felt bound in every way not to do, or her own project, lest by a premature and positive prohibition he should deprive her of the very power of prosecuting it, draw out his opinion of the arguments, and so be enabled, at least,

to form some idea as to what probability there was of his ever being brought to tolerate, or even to forgive, the experiment.

As soon as this letter was despatched, Gertrude felt her mind a little more at ease than it had been for some days past ; and, indeed, would probably have been more so than it had been for months, now that her sanguine nature made her hope that she had put this most important matter into the surest and safest train, had not a most unexpected monitress sprung up to annoy her, in the person of Mrs. Sally Whitecross, now become entirely her own attendant. This young woman, whose debt of gratitude to Vandeleur, the longer she lived she became the more sensible of, now took it into her head to evince it by watching over Gertrude in his absence, as a nurse might be supposed to watch over a lovely infant committed to her charge. It was not long before she heard Lord Luscombe's foreign servants laughing, and commenting upon the constant attendance of the Count

De l'Espoir upon her young lady. The name, of course, conveyed no idea to Sally of her *ci-devant* admirer; but still she thought it very hard that her idol, Major Vandeleur, should run the risk of losing his lady-love, for any Frenchman of them all: for neither the feelings of an English soldier's wife during the Peninsular war, nor anything she had therein seen of that nation, had tended to correct in Sally's mind the illiberal prejudice to which so many better informed persons have yielded—that of judging a nation by an individual, or by accidental circumstances. She only waited to hear that the attentions were continued; when she determined, at whatever risk to herself, to try the effect of a little timely remonstrance.

Accordingly, one evening, as she finished Gertrude's toilette, and handed her gloves and fan, she fetched forth a sharp sigh, and said, “Well, I know what I wish.”

“What do you wish, Whitecross?” said

Gertrude carelessly, as she stooped once more to the glass to arrange a stray ringlet.

“ I wish Major Vandeleur were here to dance with you to-night.”

“ Why? do I look so particularly well?” asked Gertrude, with a slight smile, and a slighter sigh.

“ Oh! you do, ma’am, to be sure,” answered the lady’s maid; “ you always do that; but it was not just that I meant.”

“ What then?” said Gertrude, as she fixed her bouquet more firmly together.

“ Oh! maybe I have my reasons.”

Gertrude looked round in astonishment: “ What in the world do you mean?”

“ Why, then, ma’am, if I must speak,”—and she affected to settle a pin in the back of Gertrude’s dress, in order to conceal a slight trepidation at the liberty which she felt she was taking;—“ then, Miss Evelyn, if I must speak, it is just this—that I don’t like to hear so much of that count’s dancing such constant attendance on you.”

“ Oh ! is that all, Sally ? Are you afraid for your favourite ? Well, I assure you there is not the least danger ; so you may make your mind perfectly easy ; besides, I have not danced since I came here.” And she ran down stairs, not herself too well satisfied that these remarks should have been made.

But Sally could not make her mind perfectly easy. She flattered herself she knew too much of the world for that, and especially of Frenchmen. She recollected how irresistible one of them had once appeared to her ; and had she not good reason then to conclude they must be so to all women ? Indeed, amidst all the contempt, horror, and detestation which in those days it was almost a duty to express and feel towards them, not the least cause was their ascendancy over the fair sex ; and we should scarcely like to affirm, that to this may not be attributed the derogatory opinion that Englishmen so long entertained of a lady’s taste. Be

that as it may, Mrs. Sally Whitecross, it appears, had no great dependance on that of Gertrude ; and accordingly, to relieve her mind, she sat down and wrote a letter upon the subject to Major Vandeleur, taking care to direct it as she had seen Gertrude direct hers, not even forgetting the final *e* in *Irelande*, and carried it to the post-office herself.

Nor in acting thus did Sally prove herself to be more meddling than the generality of her sex. In fact, she was not so, though what is called an active and bustling young woman ; and in all probability, had it not been for the precise nature of the service which Vandeleur had rendered her, such an idea never would have occurred to her. But, as it was, she felt that she had an opportunity of repaying him in kind, and of course eagerly seized upon it ; — not, however, in the form of a complaint of Gertrude ; for, not only was she already too much won upon, by her engaging gentleness and sweetness for that, but she was pleased to make

the cases more exactly similar, by representing Gertrude as artless and unsuspecting, and cautioning him against the allurements of the Frenchman. She little knew how much more similar still she might have represented them ; but she was destined soon to be enlightened.

“ Miss Evelyn,” said the count, a day or two after Mrs. Whitecross had despatched her letter, as Gertrude and he strolled on a little before the rest of their party, “ I have at this moment an opportunity of showing you such a specimen of the power of animal magnetism, as I think could not fail to convince any one, except those who are pronounced to have ‘ eyes and see not,’ ‘ ears and hear not.’ I have a person thrown into the state of somnambulism by my own power as a magnetiser ; and if you will bring any sick person to him, he will, by the force of sympathy and forgetfulness of self,—that is, by having the selfish energies so relaxed, by the magnetic fluid, as to lose their own tenacity and unite with others,—he will in this state

not only inform your patient what her or his ailment may be, but will prescribe the proper remedies to cure it."

"That indeed would be a curious sight," exclaimed Gertrude, "and I should like extremely to see it. I may choose some sick person of whom you have never even heard?"

"Nay, it must be so; else where would be the *proof*? and I am anxious that nothing should be taken upon trust from me."

It may be supposed that Gertrude readily grasped at this offered testimony, not so much for her own further satisfaction, as to have it to bring forward to convince her friends. However, when she came to consider of it at leisure, she soon perceived the utter impracticability of her contriving, in Paris, to have an invalid conveyed from one place to another, to undergo so curious an examination, without drawing down such publicity, and conjecture, as she should shrink from herself, even setting aside all consideration for the count.

In this dilemma, she could only think of having recourse to her maid, and deputing her at once to procure the invalid, and be witness to the scene. It was to take place in the house where the *somnambule* (himself a convalescent patient) resided; he was of course a poor man, living in a poor and remote street; but Sally, from having travelled over a good deal of Europe as a soldier's wife, and as maid to those of the officers, was more suited to the office than many Englishwomen would have been.

To this plan she was obliged to procure the count's concurrence; but as she represented the young woman as one entirely in her interests, and on whom she could implicitly rely, he made but few objections; the more so as he foresaw himself, though he did not admit it as yet to her, that some one confidant would be absolutely necessary in England to the carrying on his scheme, and he did not regret having an opportunity of paying his court to her beforehand.

With Sally herself the task was still less diffi-

cult ; for she had such a reliance upon her own knowledge of human nature, and especially of mankind, founded on her early escape and subsequent campaigns, as served to convince herself, at least, that she should see through the count's intentions at a glance. Besides, she was really kind-hearted ; and when Gertrude confided to her, with that air of truth which is, after all, scarcely ever mistaken, though others may be mistaken for it, that the only thought of her soul was to learn from him how to perform a cure upon her brother, the woman herself became interested in the case, and now felt a severe twinge at heart, when she recollected the letter she had written to Vandeleur ; this, however, she quieted with the reflection of how speedily another might overtake it : and, “ after all, she had, she blessed her stars, said nothing against her young lady ; ” whom, however, she now felt double zeal to serve, from some little lurking dissatisfaction with herself.

CHAPTER XII.

Ye shall have miracles—ay, sound ones too,
Seen, heard, attested, everything—but true.

The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan.

IN order still more fully to prevent all suspicion and conjecture, it was settled that Mrs. Whitecross was to proceed at once to the house of the *somnambule*, where the sick person, whom she found no difficulty in bribing with a few francs, was to meet her at the hour appointed. De l'Espoir promised to be there beforehand; and had he even known that the appointment was with his former love, and had his feelings continued in their first force towards her, he could not have awaited the interview with more punctuality, and anxiety for the final result.

The moment Mrs. Whitecross sent up Gertrude's note, mentioning that the bearer was the person to be trusted, De l'Espoir desired that she should be shown into an apartment, where he purposely waited, in order to find out, in a few minutes' *tête-à-tête* conversation, what sort of person he had to deal with. And perhaps never before did two persons meet, so anxiously determined critically to examine into the character of the other, without a suspicion of how intimately they were once acquainted !

The moment Sally was shown in, and the door closed upon her, the count spoke : " You are Miss Evelyn's maid ? " he said.

He had scarcely uttered the words when something in the voice, the foreign accent, and yet the good pronounciation of English, struck upon her ear ; and hastily flinging back her thick, black, English lace veil, she saw standing before her, in all the pride of masculine beauty, the first man who had ever whispered love into her ear or instilled it into her heart. For a moment she

stood overcome with the natural feeling of surprise, and flashing recollections; but instantly recovering herself, she began to consider the proper, and the becoming, and uttered two or three shrieks so fast after each other, that the count had not time to stop her,—if indeed his amazement would have permitted him to make the attempt. For, to what a pitch it was excited, may be imagined, when the reader is informed that Mrs. Whitecross had all the advantage of the recognition on her side. Time had not indeed dealt particularly severely with Mrs. Whitecross; but still, the mother of six children, and one who had been exposed to much vicissitudes of burning suns, and piercing winters, was not without some memorials of his flight; and the plump, and fashionably-dressed Parisian abigail, bore, at first view, but little resemblance to the fair, delicate, and sylph-like little English peasant girl of fifteen years of age.

In fact, poor old Time is condemned to bear the blame of many a theft not his; but the

day is not far distant, when *circumstance* will be made to take its share, from which it has been so long exempt.

Some will think, that as soon as Mrs. Whitecross perceived, by the unfeigned amazement of the count, and his respectful and distant inquiries as to the cause of her alarm, that he really had not the very slightest idea of what it could be, her wisest plan would have been to have drawn down her Manchester veil again, preserved the incognita, and done all that her mistress required of her, and no more. But Sally knew too much of human nature to think that would be natural in her situation ; (a knowledge, by the bye, that is often “more honoured in the breach than in the observance”—a knowledge only desirable when teaching us what to shun, seldom what to excuse,) and a feeling at that moment sprang up in her breast which I am at a loss how to designate : for, vanity one would think it could scarcely be, that made her at once angry at finding how much she was

altered, and yet anxious to prove to him that it actually was the beautiful Sally who was so altered. I think Locke ought to have taken this female feeling into consideration when discussing personal identity.

On De l'Espoir's approaching her once more, and begging to be informed what had alarmed her, she raised her eyes to him with a reproachful glance, and continued them in that position for some time. The eyes were certainly very bright and beautiful eyes, but there was nothing in the expression that he could either account for or recall.

"So you don't recollect me?" she said at last.

"Recollect you?" he stammered forth, shocked that he could be subjected to the accusation from so fine a woman as Sally certainly still was; and, strange to say, something in her voice, though of course altered also, struck upon his ear.

"Yes, recollect me. But I suppose the Count

De l'Espoir and Monsieur De Brons are people as different as, it would seem, Sally Henshawe and Mrs. Whitecross are?"

"*Bon Dieu !* Sally Henshawe?" exclaimed the count in unfeigned amazement, springing towards her. But Sally, who was not only an indignant, but really a virtuous woman, according to her own views of human nature, and sincerely attached to her worthy husband, drew back with becoming dignity. And, perhaps, if the truth was known, the desire of showing the count how virtuous she could now be, might have partly led her to discover herself.

The count who, after all, knew human nature fully as well, if not a million times better, than she did, instantly recovered himself. "Is it possible?" he exclaimed: "You are indeed altered! Never could I have supposed that the sweet, pretty, but childish little rustic, could have grown into the lovely woman now before me." And he bowed as he might have done to her mistress.

Sally's indignation subsided; she even felt joy in hearing that her beauty was only altered to be improved, and wondered at her own stupidity in doubting it. But it was an honest joy, and only flashed across her for a moment, as she thought upon her fond husband. To the count, she bowed to his bow, and said, that "she was handsome enough in the eyes of them she wanted to be handsome for."

"Then your husband still lives, Mrs.——ah—ah?"

"He does, thank God! and I hope you have forgotten his name too?"

"His name,—oh, dear no!—hem! But, somehow, I like better to call you Sally."

"But I like better to be called Mrs. Whitecross; so you will keep your distance if you please, and now inform me what you are dangling after my young lady for? Do you want Mr. Vandeleur to come across you again?"

"By Heaven, if he does!" exclaimed De l'Espoir, his dark eyes emitting sparks of fury

as the sight of Sally brought his early rival or antagonist before him ; but he forbore to utter his threats.

“ Why, then, I can tell you, he shall and will,” said Sally, “ if you don’t give over your attempts : there are them who will warn him, for one good turn deserves another.”

“ What attempts, Sally ? Is it possible that silly child has not told you the object of my attentions ?”

“ Who is the silly child ?”

“ Why, Miss Evelyn. I vow to you, Mrs. Whitecross, in the most solemn manner, and by everything sacred, that I never uttered a word to the girl in the way of love or even flirtation : in fact, she is a child compared to me. No ! though I would say nothing to offend you now, in mere self-defence, and to disabuse you of a dangerous error, I may confess that my first love was my last.”

Sally thought it proper not to seem to understand this.

“ Why, certainly, she is little more than a child,” she said ; “ and therefore it is that I would take care of her.”

“ You are right, quite right, Sally ; and I refer you to herself for the truth of what I have said. No ; I have done with love : my business now is to endeavour to instruct Miss Evelyn in an art that I think might restore her unfortunate brother to his senses.”

At this moment a person entered to say that the invalid was arrived. “ Well, let them wait,” said De l’Espoir, with a careless impatience that did not speak much for his reverence for his art, or at least for his instruments ; but instantly recollecting that there must be no appearance of collusion between the *somnambule* and the sick person selected for the experiment, he desired the latter to be shown into the apartment occupied by himself and Sally, and motioned to him to take a seat ; rightly judging that the poor invalid, who was a cripple with only one leg, would take but little

interest in the English dialogue carrying on at the farther end of a large and gloomy apartment. Accordingly, as soon as the door was closed again, he continued: "Sally, tell me if you believe me free from all love, or selfish views, towards Miss Evelyn or any other woman?"

"Towards Miss Evelyn, I do, sir, from what she has told me herself; but for other women, I neither know nor care."

"I do not hope you do, Sally; and yet, if I told you that I had been planning a visit to England since I came to my fortune and title, for the purpose of inquiring if your husband still lived, or if there was any chance for me, perhaps you would think with more kindness on one you once certainly loved, Sally."

"Ay, and one who would have taken a pretty advantage of that love."

"For that, Sally, you have seen too much of the world, not to know that at that time young men of my country had every disadvantage of

education, and everything else, to struggle against, and that there was a wildness of principle over the world—over the Continent at least—just then, that led astray older heads than yours or mine. And who can say, after all, Sally, that we might not have been happier than we are?”

“Are you beginning again?” exclaimed Sally. “Speak for yourself; I am happy enough.”

“Heaven keep you so, Sally! But don’t stand in the way of all that remains for me, that of doing good to my fellow-creatures. Do not prejudice Miss Evelyn against me by mentioning our early folly,—if such must now be called what we once both called by another name, Sally, in our evening strolls by the hawthorn-lane. But never mind; let me serve this poor youth if I can, and then forget me.”

Sally wiped her eyes, and promised not to be the means of stopping him from anything that was right.

“ Then come up now, and see how much I can do.”

They went up stairs accordingly to a room in which stood a bed with the curtains drawn, and in it De l’Espoir informed Sally that his *somnambule* lay, in that mysterious sleep into which he had thrown him, by the force of the magnetic fluid which he had imparted to him.

“ You may go over and look at him,” said he.

“ Is there no fear of wakening him ?”

“ Not the least ; he cannot wake while I will him to sleep.”

She approached the bed, and saw a man apparently in deep slumber.

The invalid was then brought in. It was clear that he and De l’Espoir had never met before ; and equally clear that there had no intelligence passed between the latter, and the sleeper since the arrival of the sick man. On his entrance now into the chamber, De l’Espoir led him over to the bed ; and before he uttered a word, the sleeper was heard to turn and moan as if he felt some uneasiness.

“ He is now experiencing the influence of the sick man’s presence,” whispered the count to Mrs. Whitecross.

She became terrified, and fancied that she herself felt something *queer*.

“ Sit down, but don’t be alarmed at whatever you may see,” said the count; and gently extricating one of the sleeper’s hands from the bed-coverings, he brought it in contact with that of the invalid. The sleeper took the hand and held it for a few minutes. De l’Espoir spoke. He informed the sleeper that the person whose hand he held desired some information respecting his state of health. There was no answer for a moment; but then the sleeper, without moving, or having once opened his eyes, or even pushed back the curtains, pronounced these words, in a decided tone of conviction: “ The man whose hand I hold is sick: he has been treated for a disease of the stomach, and stimulating medicines given him, which have augmented the disease, the seat of which is in

the liver, and not in the stomach ; let him go home, avoid the hot and intoxicating liquors he has hitherto indulged in to keep down the uneasy sensations that succeeded to the amputation of his leg—let him have recourse to medicines of an opposite tendency, and he will recover.”

De l’Espoir, who had hitherto kept his eyes fixed on the sleeper, was now startled from his contemplation by a piercing shriek from Mrs. Whitecross, whose superstitious terrors at this extraordinary manifestation of *clairvoyance* totally overcame her, and, before De l’Espoir had time to re-assure her, she actually fainted.* De l’Espoir caused her to be immediately carried out of the room, and directed the proper restoratives to be applied. When these had succeeded, and she opened her eyes, she found

* Without pledging ourselves for the accuracy of the particulars of this case, we need only refer our readers to the reports of the commissioners who examined into the subject of animal magnetism in Paris in 1826, for the authenticity of facts as curious.

herself in the same apartment into which she had first been shown, with nobody but the count there besides.

“ Well, Sally,” said he smiling, “ what do you think of my powers now ?” She confessed herself overwhelmed. “ Well, you will give a good account of me to your young lady ? eh ?—and you will say nothing to stand between me and her further instruction for her brother’s recovery. And, Sally, let me hope I may see you again ?”

Sally made some dignified reply about having no objection to see him as a friend ; and, upon the whole, not ill pleased with her morning’s adventure,—proud of all she had to tell, and of all she must not tell, though redounding so highly to her own honour,—she could not resist calling on her way home at the house whence she had procured the invalid. Here, as they were already necessarily in so much of the secret, she could not conceive it any harm to let them know that it was no low vulgar magnetiser they

had to deal with, but no less a person than the Count de l'Espoir.

The woman of the house, mother to the poor cripple, changed colour at the name, and hesitated not to load him with a parent's curses. He had not long before robbed her of her only daughter, and that when her son was fighting the battles of his country, in one of which he had lost that leg, to which the *somnambule* alluded.

Sally, as may be supposed, both felt and expressed a proper degree of horror at this intelligence ; upon which the woman, a decent and respectable person in her sphere, proceeded to unfold to Sally such a character of him, supported by facts and witnesses to which she referred her, as caused Sally to think she had indeed had, a second time, a merciful escape that he did not carry her off wholesale to the infernal regions.

The truth of the magnetic power, however, she could not deny ; and, indeed, nothing in the

poor woman's account tended to invalidate it ; on the contrary, everything corroborated his head to be as good, as his heart was bad. Sally came therefore to the determination that she would tell the truth to Miss Evelyn on that point ; but would take care to warn her against his general character, and even to repeat these words of the poor woman's, " If there be a young lady in the case," (as, in spite of all cautions, Sally had dropped some hints,) " tell her to take a mother's word for it, that she has no chance of safety but in avoidance."

Unfortunately they were the words, of all others, the least calculated to touch the pre-occupied heart of the guileless and pure-minded Gertrude. Had she spoken of prudence, propriety, conventional rules, or the duty of confidence in her family, it might, and probably would, from any one, have had due effect ; but the idea of danger, which to her only appeared in the one form of entangling her affections, she treated with the contempt it deserved.

However, the scene which awaited Sally on her return, was one which did not leave her either time or inclination to enforce her lessons, even with the eloquence she might otherwise have employed. And, above all things, whatever flickerings might have crossed her mind about confiding to Gertrude her own knowledge of the count, now completely vanished ; as she determined that such unpleasant confidence was no longer necessary.

On her return to Lord Luscombe's hotel, she found it in a complete uproar : men shouting, and running to and fro ; women chattering, and running in their way ; and, in short, preparations making for a hasty return to England, with all due confusion. Notwithstanding all Sally's travelling, her "mother-tongue" was still that which, in any sudden emergency at least, came most home to her ear. She fled, therefore, as quickly as was possible, from the jabbering of the foreign domestics, to her young lady's apartment, to learn what this

sudden fuss could mean. She found her apparently acting under the same influence as those she had flown from ; pulling her dresses out of their receptacles, and, in the hurried restlessness of irrepressible anxiety, attempting to pack them for travelling, with as much haste as if the entire expedition was only retarded by waiting for her wardrobe ! Sally, now in serious alarm, inquired what had happened ? “ Oh, rather tell me, Sally,” said Gertrude, flying to her and seizing her by the arm, “ oh, rather tell me what has happened ! Do I live or die ? Are there any hopes for me ? ” And she gasped for breath from her own vehemence.

Sally was terrified, and really feared her intellects were disturbed. “ For God’s sake, ma’am, what is the matter ? ” she now whimpered out in tears.

“ My brother—my brother, Sally ! he is—he is very ill ; and poor Mr. Mason is—no more, and he is left all alone. My father has hinted it to me ; but Lady Luscombe’s letters speak more

plainly. We are to leave Paris this evening. Now, tell me what you have seen ; have I any chance of saving him ?”

“ It was not in human nature, at least not in Sally Whitecross’s knowledge of it, not to bestow all the comfort in her power at such a crisis as this. She gave, therefore, a full, true, and clear account of the wonderful scene she had witnessed, as far as the effect of animal magnetism was concerned, and did not hesitate to give it all the colouring of her own startled imagination : and was then, as in duty bound, beginning with, “ Still I don’t much like—” but Gertrude stopped her, by clasping her hands and exclaiming, “ Then the die is cast !” And in that moment of wild excitement and agitation, she flew over to her writing-table, and scribbled these words to De l’Espoir :

“ I have terrible accounts from England. I accept your generous offer. Come after us, and let me do all I can to repair my absence from my beloved brother at such a time. I

cannot delay sending this, long enough to think whether or not I ought to confide to my maid your intended visit to England ; so that point I leave to your own discretion and discernment. I enclose a bank-note, which will defray your expenses, and which it will offend and shock me if you refuse, as I shall be under sufficient obligations to you without adding pecuniary ones."

Having, with trembling hands, folded and sealed this note, she delivered it to Sally, and told her she must repair instantly with it to the hotel of the count. Sally's conscience twitched her, and she began again about her dislike of the count ; but Gertrude, who very naturally thought she herself had as good an opportunity of judging of him as Sally, who had only then seen him for the first time, as she supposed, impatiently stopped her, asking if that was a reason why she was not to avail herself of his knowledge or skill to save her brother, and that she wanted nothing more of him.

“Take care of that, ma’am,” said Sally, and repeated the old woman’s words.

“I thought,” said Gertrude, “I desired you most particularly not to mention the count’s name to any one?”

Sally was frightened, and tried to make some excuse. Gertrude interrupted her.

“I am very much displeased at your disobeying my orders. You have shown me that you are not to be trusted. Happily it does not signify now, as we are leaving Paris so immediately; but of this be assured, that I consider myself a better judge of my own conduct and feelings than either you or your new friend can be.”

Sally was too much alarmed at having displeased her young lady to make further remonstrance, and concluding that the note was in all probability to bid him farewell, especially as she espied a bank-note enclosed in it—which, after all, did not look like love—she compounded with her conscience, and departed on her mission.

On arriving at the count's door, she met him just returning from their rendezvous: he expressed a hasty pleasure at seeing her so soon again, and without taking time to observe her "altered eye," he hastily seized the note, and running up stairs, perused it with no small delight.

"Thus, then," said he, "are my wishes crowned at last. Fate, I thank thee! or rather, De l'Espoir, I thank thy own cool courage!" All cool and calculating as he was however, it was some moments before he could subdue his joy at having seen the poor bird fly into the net, sufficiently to consider what she had said about trusting Sally: but when he did weigh the matter deliberately, he came to the determination that it was better to confide in her who already knew so much, than to convert her into a spy by choosing some one else as a confidant. And the more he considered, the more he saw the necessity there would be of having some third person to carry notes and messages between him and Gertrude. He was perfectly aware

nevertheless, that Sally would require no little management ; for though he succeeded in soothing her in the morning by an appeal to her vanity, he saw very plainly that the slightest circumstance would be sufficient to awaken her former suspicions of him, and that the least hint dropped on that subject to her young mistress, would end his hopes at one fell swoop. In this he judged truly ; but he did Sally less than justice when he thought, that, in order to allay late suspicions, he had only to profess former love. Even had her virtue (as she called it) not received the stimulus it did, by hearing of his depravity, she still had truth and principle enough, albeit a little vain and presuming, to shrink with horror from any open declaration of love to herself, both as a wife and mother. Before having recourse, however, to this expedient, which, after all, he thought it as well for many reasons to reserve to the last, De l'Espoir determined to sift out her opinion of his real plan of proceeding.

He summoned her accordingly to his presence, and threw out some hints of his intention of going *incog.* to England, to assist Miss Evelyn in her experiments upon her brother. But, before he had proceeded half-way in his disclosure, or hinted at Miss Evelyn's concurrence in it, Mrs. Whitecross burst out into such a torrent of abuse, and such downright, and rational representations of the madness and wickedness of such a scheme, coupled with threats of instantly informing Lord and Lady Luscombe of the whole business, that De l'Espoir saw clearly that she could never be brought to sanction it; and that even persuasions from Gertrude herself, whom she affected to look upon as a mere child, would but stimulate her determination to betray the secret. In this emergency he had recourse to his original spell; and having always kept in view the probability of its proving the most powerful, he had taken care to conceal whatever might have appeared inconsistent with it. He affected to consider for a moment what

else remained for him to urge ; and then, apparently driven by his feelings to speak the desperate truth, he fell upon his knees before Sally, and seizing her hand, he insulted her ears by a declaration that all he had said, all he had planned, all he had thought of, was only to cover the real object he had in view, namely, to get to England on any pretence for the sake of his love to her !

It is unnecessary to paint her indignation ; it was unfeigned and unbounded : for the whole circumstance was invested with everything that made guilt doubly guilty to a vulgar mind. She stormed and she preached ; but she had to do with one a thousand times her match in cleverness. He suffered her wrath to expend itself by its own force, and by degrees he ventured adroitly to throw in such hints of her noble conduct, as, on a mind like hers, could not fail to produce a sedative effect. Presently he became overwhelmed, grew penitent, confessed himself subdued by her eloquence ; then wept in horror

of his past crimes, all of which he failed not to lay to the account of that unfortunate scape-goat, disappointed love ; and finally, before he left her, had not only obtained her forgiveness, on his promise to abandon all thoughts of visiting England, but secured her reiterated promise not to drive him to his wicked courses again, from desperation at finding his hopeless love betrayed. Once more Sally left his presence highly satisfied with herself, and persuaded that nothing but her young lady's leaving Paris so immediately, should induce her to keep the secret of his infamy ; which, however, she was very glad to have a proper excuse to keep, as the disclosure of it now, would involve her, having already concealed the very important fact of her former acquaintance with him.

She was no sooner out of the house, than he, trusting at once to his quicker pace in walking, and superior knowledge of the town, left it also, and succeeded in arriving at Lord Luscombe's

hotel before her return. He inquired for Lady Luscombe, intending only to send up his card had she been visible; but as she was out paying some farewell visits, he asked for Gertrude, and was admitted. All agitated and bewildered as she was, she felt but too happy to see him—at once to have her spirits reassured by his confident anticipations, and to make the necessary arrangements for their future meetings. And here Gertrude shrank with fresh horror from the manœuvring, and the clandestine intercourse, that she saw would be necessary, notwithstanding De l'Espoir's anxious efforts to keep it as much as possible in the background. He told her, indeed, that Sally was absolutely unfit to be trusted, and this the morning's disclosure tended to confirm; and he had the courage and adroitness laughingly to hint, that as nothing could disabuse her of the idea of their being lover and beloved, instead of patient and physician, he had found it absolutely necessary to conceal from her the plan of his going to

England, as he plainly perceived that she had taken such a dislike to him, from the bare idea of his rivalling Major Vandeleur, as would induce her, in revenge, to do all she could to prejudice every one against him. This sounded so plausible, that Gertrude heard it undoubtingly, and blushed and laughed at the idea.

It was then settled that De l'Espoir was to leave Paris within two days after Gertrude and her party, and to repair immediately to Beauton, a small post-town about two miles distant from the park, and from thence to despatch a note to inform Gertrude of his arrival. She trembled when this awful step appeared so near; but De l'Espoir, like an able general, coolly rose to take his leave before she should have time to call up any more arguments against the plan, or look too closely into its various difficulties.

“Well, adieu for a short time!” he said. “Trust me, we shall see happier days. Make my compliments to Lady Luscombe, for I shall

not intrude again, as you must be much engaged."

She followed him to the door with undefined terror at the thoughts of where they should meet next, and a sort of lingering wish to keep the power of revoking her consent in her hand a few minutes longer. He was as anxious to escape for the very opposite reason. As they gained the hall, they were met by Sally, who, hearing that the count was in the house, and that Lady Luscombe was out, had some misgiving which induced her to form the resolution of summoning Gertrude away from him on some domestic pretext. She was too late, however; and the moment that De l'Espoir spied her, he repeated his adieus much more emphatically, and as if for ever, and departed.

Sally contented herself with saying, half to Gertrude, and half to herself, "Thank God, you're gone at last!" and returned to her packing.

CHAPTER XIII.

“ Charmed by her voice, the harmonious sounds invade
His clouded mind, and for a time persuade.
Like a pleased infant, who has newly caught
From the maternal glance a gleam of thought,
He stands enrapt the half-known voice to hear,
And starts, half conscious of the falling tear.”

Mrs. WHITECROSS had but a very few minutes set out upon her office as witness to the effects of animal magnetism, in giving an insight into the diseases of others, and inspiring a knowledge of the proper remedies, (I suppose by the power of the same unperverted instinct which teaches dogs and other animals to select their medicines amongst herbs,) when the English post arrived with letters for Lord and Lady Luscombe, and one for Gertrude. The latter, it must be con-

fessed, was sufficiently alarming, considering that her father had, with the inconsiderateness that marked his character, if not his class, hitherto buoyed up her hopes far beyond the truth. It was as follows :

“MY DEAR GERTRUDE ;

“I do not wish to alarm you, but, as the time you proposed staying in Paris is already past, I feel the less hesitation in informing you that I do not think your poor brother has been so well of late. You will be very sorry to hear that poor old Mason is no more. He died in an odd way, after all. He had been poorly ever since he came here, and for the last two or three days confined to bed : but at last, the third day, that d—d Miss Wilson went in to see him ; and whether it was the sight of her, or what, I don't know, but she came out saying the poor old man was dead. I asked her what she had done to him. She declared nothing, but asked him how he was, and to forgive her ; upon

which he bid her go away in a weak voice ; and when she went nearer, (the d—d wretch!) to save him the trouble, she says, of speaking so loud, he tried to motion her away with his hand, and muttered something as if in his throat. She was frightened, she says, at the thoughts of his dying without forgiving her, and went up to the bed and fell on her knees ; but receiving no answer, she found he was dead. I was going to turn her out of the house ; but she looked so terrified and so sorry, and then Herbert is so poorly, that my heart failed me. I wish you could come home, my dear ; we are badly enough off without you. We have had our friend Mr. C—— here again, but he does not much like how poor Herbert is going on.

“ Your affectionate father,

“ GEORGE EVELYN.”

It must be acknowledged that few epistles could be less satisfactory than the foregoing, on such a subject. It fully succeeded, however,

in terrifying Gertrude nearly out of her wits, though, on what point to fix, she knew not. Was Herbert dying? Was his reason more alienated? or had it become madness? Not one of these questions could she solve; and when, throwing herself into Lady Luscombe's arms, she besought her to tell her what her letters from the same neighbourhood said, she could gather little more. Lady Luscombe, knowing that she should in vain seek to disguise the truth from her penetrating anxiety, thought it best at once to show her the passage in Lord Foxhill's letter. It ran thus: "Young Evelyn is rapidly declining: your friend Gertrude will soon be a splendid heiress."

It is really strange in what a careless manner, almost of congratulation, kind and good-hearted people will sometimes speak of an event that is perhaps to destroy for ever the earthly happiness of the object of their felicitations. On the present occasion, Gertrude merely said, "May I never live to see the day!" in a tone which would

have chilled the most unthinking, and proceeded to ask Lady Luscombe what was to be done.

The intended period of their stay in Paris was already elapsed, and Lord Luscombe had thrown out many hints of his wish to return home. His lady, however, gay and good-humoured, delighted with her reception in society, and all she saw around her, either turned a deaf ear to such hints, or laughed them off, from day to day. But as she was in reality kind and good-natured, and sincerely attached to her young friend, and distressed at being the cause of her absence at such a time, she now started up, and declaring that not one moment longer should be lost, she ran to Lord Luscombe's dressing-room, and informed him of the sad news. He regretted the cause, but was exceedingly happy at the effect ; and lest any letters should arrive next morning to render such haste unnecessary, he heartily concurred in his wife's proposal that they should leave Paris that very evening.

This, however, was found impracticable ; but as early next morning as daylight permitted, they bade adieu to that gay city, and returned to England, every one of them with feelings very much in the same tone in which they had left it two months before ; Lord and Lady Luscombe gay, or contented, according to their different temperaments, and poor Gertrude with the same heavy and gnawing anxiety at heart, and only with the additional grief for poor Mr. Mason's death. On arriving at her father's gate, having parted with her friends at Lord Foxhill's house, where she had joined them on going, she stopped the carriage to make more particular inquiries, or at least to receive answers that she could more rely on, than those she received at Foxhill, and was somewhat relieved by learning that her brother had been considered better for the few last days, and was down-stairs. She hurried to the house, and there, in the summer sitting-room, the scene of so much of their former happiness, sports, and

studies, she found him seated in an arm-chair at the open window, apparently enjoying the soft evening breeze that came up the flowery declivity already often alluded to, laden with all the mingled sweets it afforded. Her father and Miss Wilson were also in the room, and they both came forward to receive her ; but even while receiving and returning their salutations, her eye anxiously wandered to the beloved invalid.

She saw beyond all doubt that he recognised her, and not only recognised her, but even made several efforts to approach and join in bidding her welcome ; but was each time prevented by some nervous fear, or bodily weakness, and again sank down into his chair. She flew towards him ; and alike fearful of agitating him, and unable to suppress her affectionate feelings, she knelt down before him, and laying her hands upon his knees, looked up into his face.

He was paler, and more haggard-looking, than when she had left him ; but his countenance decidedly, at that moment, expressed more of

intelligence. He smiled affectionately upon her ; and on her offering her lips to him, he stooped to receive the salutation, and said “ Gertrude,” in a soft low tone of pleasure and affection.

She burst into tears, which from the first moment of her entrance she had been struggling to restrain, and falling on his neck, she wept long and convulsively. All that had passed since they parted rushed back upon her mind. The doubts and fears, and hopes and prayers, she had gone through for him—the fearful responsibility which she had consented to incur for his dear sake, all crowded upon her heart at once, and she embraced him as the new-found, tangible object of all these emotions and all this suffering ; and with a feeling which can only be compared to that with which a mother embraces her new first-born, it seemed to her as if she had never loved him until now : he himself became aware of the excess of her emotion, though not of its cause, and gently asked, “ Have I hurt you, Gertrude ?”

Her renewed embraces satisfied him that he had not ; and then he asked if she wept for coming home.

“ No,” she exclaimed ; “ Heaven knows how I have longed to return to you, dearest Herbert !”

“ I rather—I rather wonder at that, I think,” said the poor boy thoughtfully, and pressing his hand upon his forehead ; but the effort and the scene altogether overcame him, and he too burst into tears.

I do believe there never was one human being loved another as Gertrude loved her brother at that moment : it seemed as if the only thing that could recall him to consciousness, or natural feeling, was his love for, and sympathy with her ; and as she bent over and soothed him with her caresses, she made a vow in her heart that no other love, no overstrained sense of self-respect, no consideration of any kind, should stand between her and every effort for his recovery. In a few minutes, by checking her own

tears, she succeeded in drying his ; and pointing to the soft fall of the hill down which she had so often run to escape from him, and from her lessons, she asked him if he remembered chasing her there. He glanced quickly at the walk, then at her with a smile that was almost arch ; but instantly breathing a deep sigh, he suffered his head to droop into its usual position upon his breast, and his countenance resumed its listless expression.

To those who knew the manly character and spirit of the boy, these indications sometimes gave the idea that his mind was not as totally destroyed as would at other times appear, and even that he was not wholly unconscious of his state ; but that, some important function being impaired, he felt unequal to all mental exertion whatsoever, and remained passive and uncomplaining under the infliction.

After a little time, when he seemed to have become composed again, Gertrude went over to

her father, who had thrown himself upon the sofa during this scene.

“ My dear father !” she whispered, “ Herbert seems to me to be a great deal better than when I left him.”

Mr. Evelyn smiled an odd, cold, almost bitter smile.

“ Dear sir, you, being constantly with him, may not observe it ; but I assure you he never before manifested nearly so much recollection.”

“ Mr. C. does not think him better.”

“ That surprises and grieves me very much indeed. Don’t you perceive yourself, sir, that he seems more collected ?”

“ Yes, more collected ; but look at him now.”

She did look, and perceived him gazing after her, and again making weak and fruitless efforts to rise from his chair. He again pronounced her name. In an instant she was by his side ; and perceiving that his bodily strength

had indeed decayed so much as to render him unable now, even with her assistance, to cross the room, she drew a footstool beside his chair, and sat down at his feet. He seemed pleased and satisfied, and even touched and smiled at some articles of her Parisian costume, as if he was fully alive to its novelty.

As nothing could to Gertrude have been so shocking as the total loss of his intellect, so nothing that her father could say or hint could now damp her pleasure in these apparent symptoms of its recovery ; and for the dissatisfaction of his eminent physician, she could only hope that her father had mistaken him. That Herbert was weaker than when she left him, she could not deny ; but then he had been ill, and every one agreed that he was getting better again.

In fact, for some days after her return, he did appear to be gaining strength ; but even she could not disguise from herself, with all the self-will of hope, that his mental and bodily

strength appeared unequally balanced, and that according as one predominated the other declined. They seemed to vibrate thus for a short time, now exciting in Gertrude's sanguine breast the liveliest hopes, now plunging her into the depths of despair; when one day, as she and Miss Wilson sat together in the drawing-room, a note was handed to Gertrude. The first glance served to convince her that it was from De l'Espoir, and that he was already arrived at the town of Beauton.

Youth, ardent youth, is so inconsistent! It is so new to life, and its chequered events, its causes and effects, that though it may adopt the very same means which it has seen others adopt to effect certain ends, yet it is frequently only when those ends have actually been produced, that it begins to believe in the reality of its own powers.

Although Gertrude had considered, resolved, agreed to, and arranged everything for this visit of the Count De l'Espoir, and had, from the

moment of her return home, lived in a kind of feverish excitement, expecting his arrival ; yet it was only when it had actually taken place, that she became thoroughly alarmed at the powerful engine which her own hand had set in motion ; and so great was her agitation at the instant, that it attracted the attention (albeit not very susceptible) of her humble companion, even to the extent of causing her to ask if she were ill.

“ No, no — not ill, Miss Wilson; but so terrified !” and she panted as if indeed she had found a viper in the note she still held in her hand.

“ Terrified ! ma’am ?” repeated Miss Wilson.

“ Yes. But ask me no questions. What *shall* I do ?”

Miss Wilson, judging that “ ask me no questions,” meant also “ nor answer any,” which being also congenial to her habits, took no notice of the last ; and Gertrude remained for a few minutes like one bewildered.

It was fortunate for her secret that there was not a more intelligent witness of her agitation. "What have I done?" again escaped her trembling lips; and although even peculiarly ignorant of the harsh construction which the world might put upon her proceeding, her heart whispered "Vandeleur!" in a tone of gentle reproach which she could not misunderstand.

De l'Espoir, however, showed himself well skilled in human nature, when he wished this to be the feeling that awoke within her, rather than more artificial ones, which, coming under the form of lessons of propriety, assume the sacredness of duty. For she, in her affectionate devotion to her brother, soon persuaded herself, that were Vandeleur himself, with all her own happiness, to be the sacrifice, she ought not to hesitate between them and that brother's recovery. And probably she would not have hesitated, dearly as she loved Vandeleur; for Gertrude's principles were as pure, and upright, as her affections were ardent; and they kept

each other in perfect and beautiful control. It was only where they seemed to her to clash, and to become inextricably entangled, to each other's destruction, that she could ever be led into error,—and this from her own guileless and unsuspecting nature.

It never ought to have been so. Alas ! it never ought to have become necessary for the general security of social order, that a check should be put upon our dearest and our sweetest feelings and sensibilities. Oh ! why, why did man destroy his Creator's first glorious plan of an earthly paradise ? Severely must he labour before he can bring back this ruined earth to that first blissful state !

No sooner did poor Gertrude come to this, as she hoped, proper and disinterested conclusion, than she felt the necessity of composing her spirits, and setting herself seriously to consider the steps that it now devolved upon her to take in this momentous business. For this purpose she retired to her own chamber, and there once more read over the count's epistle.

It was written with all the caution that it was possible to use against alarming her, affecting to look on the whole business in a light and matter-of-course sort of way; which, he hoped, would have the effect of soothing her. Still, final and minute arrangements he knew could not longer be deferred; and accordingly he informed her, that foreseeing every difficulty that might attend their interviews, he had determined on coming to the town of Beauton as a petty French jeweller, and had brought a few trinkets and baubles with him for this purpose: and begged of her in communicating with him through any intermediate person, (should such be necessary,) to remember this new character of his: but, in order to defer the necessity of any such confidence as long as possible, he informed her that on his arrival the day before, he had made all the inquiries he could, *à la dérobée*, concerning the situation of Beauton Park, &c. &c. and had the next morning himself, in person, reconnoitred

the grounds and demesne, which, indeed, nearly extended to the town. He then described a particular, secluded grove, where he implored Gertrude to consent to meet him that evening before dusk, as it was absolutely necessary that they should have, at least, one interview, in order to arrange matters previous to their commencing operations. Taking it for granted, he said, that her good sense would second him in this, he informed her that he should be in waiting there the whole evening until she appeared; but, by everything rational or consistent, he implored her not to suffer any childish alarm or uneasiness, or want of confidence in him, to induce her to think of betraying him to any one; —but, above all others, not to her busy, self-sufficient abigail.

There was something in the tone of this letter that displeased and chilled Gertrude. The necessity of an interview she could not for a moment deny: “But what does he mean by uneasiness, and want of confidence in him?”

she said aloud, though no one was present to reply. “What confidence? I’m sure it is he is so anxious to keep the secret, not I. Or does he mean—is it indeed come to this—that I am placing confidence in him by meeting him alone? If so, I will not do it; for this there can be no imperative necessity. I will take Miss Wilson with me; I know my power over her, and her habits of obedience will ensure her silence. But soft,—am I at liberty to betray Count De l’Espoir’s secret? No, certainly not. I must then write, and ask his permission; but meet him alone in the dusk of the evening I will not. It is just what would shock Vandeleur, I know; and yet the evening, when my father and the servants are all engaged at or after dinner, is the only time I could be sure of being free from interruption. Heigh-ho! he is right in saying Whitecross is not to be trusted, she is so babbling. Well, I must write to him—and I hate that too. Heigh-ho! well, dearest Herbert, it is for you, and may Heaven grant that the end

may sanctify the means!—at all events, it is too late to consider farther about them now.” And with this fatal conclusion—so characteristic of frail mortality, whose thoughts are finite,—this conclusion, which has often silenced the last whisper of our good angel to rescue us from some yawning precipice,—she went to write to *De l’Espoir*.

Her newly-awakened alarms at his style, so different from that he used in Paris, she did not of course betray; but with that dignity of feeling which now and then broke out amidst her infantine confidence, as the blush of indignant virtue will sometimes startle us on the cheek of infancy, if wrongfully accused, she announced to him her determination not to give him the meeting he desired, unattended. She described Miss Wilson to him as far as was essential, and mentioned how fully she could depend upon her silence; and concluded by saying, that if she did not hear from him again, she should suppose herself at liberty to mention

the matter as far as she should deem advisable to Miss Wilson, and, accompanied by her, should meet him in the grove. She felt that she dared not bring him, upon any pretext, to the house, lest the prying eyes of Sally should light upon him.

As soon as her note was completed, she brought it herself down-stairs, in order to avoid ringing for her maid: for, although it was directed under the name of Dubois, which the count had assumed for the present, still Gertrude's conscience made her anxious to adopt every precaution against exciting suspicion. As she crossed the hall, she met the servant who had brought the note for her to the drawing-room, and inquired of him if the person who came with it still waited. He said not; that it was brought by a little boy, who, handing it in, said no answer was required, and instantly departed.

“This was to ensure my compliance,” said Gertrude to herself; “but I hope I require

something more than so trivial, and apparently accidental a circumstance, to induce me to turn out of the common path of propriety."

"Then, William," she said aloud, "I must trouble you to carry this note to Beauton. Inquire at Mrs. Lane's, the grocer, for a French jeweller, and deliver this note to him yourself. It is necessary it should go instantly; so get your hat, and go out this way by the hall-door, and across the fields, and make haste back."

The man did as he was desired, Gertrude still keeping the note in her hand until he returned with his hat, and not aware that her deep blush and faltering accents at this her first connivance in anything like disguise or falsehood, together with her unusual expressions of haste, did not escape the man's attention; although it was not until after circumstances gave importance to such appearances that he thought of recalling them. He departed with the billet, and Gertrude retired to her chamber to tell herself, again

and again, that the die was now fairly cast, let it turn up what it might.

For the first time she congratulated herself upon her lover's absence, as she reflected that, had he been in the neighbourhood, or even had her mother lived, she had found her present undertaking almost impracticable. "But if it be successful," she said, "I shall consider these apparently fortuitous circumstances as direct interpositions of Providence in my favour."

Alas! how fallacious is the faith founded upon circumstance! The rules of right and wrong alone are immutable; we should never venture to look beyond them.

In the mean while, the day was passing over, and Gertrude received no answer from the count. She ascertained that the servant had delivered the note into his own hands, and had even, through rustic curiosity, spoken with him; so that there was no longer a doubt but that his silence was to be taken as permission for what Gertrude required.

In fact, provided her confidant could be relied on for a few days, so as not to defeat all by a premature discovery, De l'Espoir was rather pleased that there should be one witness of her voluntary intercourse with him ; while she, poor thing ! felt as if half the objections were removed by the confidence being extended to any one member of her own family.

As if the Fates were disposed to forward Gertrude's plans in every way, Mr. Evelyn, who seldom indeed dined alone, this day brought home two or three gentlemen with him to dinner ; and although Gertrude seldom deemed her long sojourn in the dining-room after the cloth was removed, either necessary or desirable, she left it even earlier than usual on this occasion, and requested Miss Wilson to accompany her to her chamber. Miss Wilson might have been a little astonished at the request, as it was rather an unusual one ; but I believe such a sensation never had had birth in her torpid breast. As soon as they were seated,

Gertrude commenced, with a seriousness and dignity of tone and manner, which the youngest and the gentlest will naturally assume over those of inferior minds, to enforce the necessity of the strictest secrecy on the subject which she was about to speak of. Miss Wilson promised obedience, of course ; and, indeed, when Gertrude recollected how very little inducement it afforded for her to break through her usual habits of silence, she almost thought the precautions she was taking were superfluous.

She proceeded to inform her that a Frenchman had undertaken to cure her brother ; but that, as her father had a great dislike to every one, and almost everything, appertaining to that nation, she thought it right and necessary to conceal the circumstance from him ; and as she did not deem it prudent or proper to meet the gentleman alone, yet must occasionally see him, in order to arrange and plan the different preparations for the cure, she had determined upon confiding in her, and taking her with her upon

these occasions. She concluded by desiring her to prepare to accompany her just then.

Had these circumstances, and this communication fallen within Miss Wilson's ken previous to her residence at Beauton Park, it is very probable the whole matter would have failed to excite even a passing thought ; but during her attendance upon Lady Alicia she had read many and many a novel, all, all about "the one loved name" of love ; and this continuing for several years, and being reduced to practice, as it were, in her own case, by the old fox-hunter's proposals, she could not remain (as was proved to poor old Mr. Mason's cost) altogether so dead upon the subject as she once had been. Still, the life imparted was like that conveyed by galvanism to the limbs and muscles of a frog. It served little other purpose than to astonish, scare, and terrify the spectators by its awkward and uncontrol manifestations ; while not a spark was kindled in her heart to guide or to direct them.

When Gertrude first made her communication, no doubt of its veracity entered Miss Wilson's mind; but when she accompanied her through the demesne, across one or two fields to the specified grove, and there beheld the very handsome and gallant-looking *gentleman*, who hurried forward to meet her with an air and manner very strikingly different from that of "a quack doctor,"—as she had imagined him to be; and when she saw the undisguised rapture that sparkled in his brilliant eyes,—she said to herself at once, but in her own way, that, under pretence of curing the brother's head, he was come to wound the sister's heart.

Still, what had she to do with that? For Major Vandeleur she had no particular regard: indeed, all she knew of him was, that he had come to upset the establishment at Beauton as far as she was concerned. For, although he had readily joined with Gertrude in the propriety of settling an independence upon her humble friend, and though this had been distantly

and delicately hinted to her, yet such was her sluggish inertia, that anything like a change came to her like a calamity. From whom or whence that change should proceed was, then, a matter of little moment to her; and, indeed, if she reasoned at all upon the subject, it was to think that as in the former case her dismissal was a thing decided upon, she might, in that now before her, be better, and could not be worse. It was one of the consequences of Miss Wilson's sleepy intellect never to get more than one view of any subject at a time, just as if only a small part of her brain was in proper condition to receive an impression; and therefore generally the moment any idea entered, it became instantly established there as a fact, when others would discuss and perhaps reject it altogether. And a passing thought being to her as great an effort as the deepest consideration to a more powerful mind, it was attended with the same importance and conviction. Thus, though she heard not a word of love

breathed between De l'Espoir and Gertrude, although near enough to catch much of what they said, that circumstance went not one step towards removing the first impression which she had stupidly conceived, solely from his appearance being such as she had read of.

In the mean while, the idea of such a suspicion arising in her mind never entered into Gertrude's; and after undergoing a degree of nervous agitation during the interview, which obliged her to lean against a tree for support, she arranged with De l'Espoir that the first trial of the effects of animal magnetism on her brother's malady should take place the very next day! De l'Espoir had prepared her for the possibility of many trials being necessary, and she felt a kind of relief in hearing that it was more than probable that the first or second would produce no apparent effect whatever.

Had De l'Espoir been less deeply interested, he would perhaps have betrayed some impati-

ence at the nervous, and almost childish pertinacity with which the poor girl made him again and again recapitulate his strongest arguments in favour of the theory, even as a woman loves to have her ear refilled with the vows of love as fast as it transmits them to the brain or heart.

As the spring was now pretty far advanced, and the weather extremely fine for the season, and as the objections to introducing De l'Espoir into the house continued in full force, it was agreed that the best method to prevent discovery, would be for Gertrude to endeavour to bring Herbert to an arbour, which remained in what had once been a pleasure-garden, but which, as it was a considerable distance from the house, had of late years been abandoned almost entirely, and suffered to run wild. Gertrude alone sometimes strolled thither, for the sake of "lang syne," or to vary her rambles; and as the gravel-walk leading to it, though now overgrown with weeds

and grass, was still level, she had no doubt of being able to wheel Herbert thither in his garden-chair. Of his willingness to accompany her, too, she had little apprehension ; for, besides his ever gentle and complying temper, he was, when able to enjoy it, always fond of the open air, and all the delicious offerings it presents to the senses and the heart.

As soon as this spot was decided upon, and the hour appointed which was indeed to colour Gertrude's future fate through that of her brother, she parted from De l'Espoir and returned to the house with Miss Wilson. She maintained an absolute silence during their walk homewards, not so much either through necessity or design, as from the tension, as it were, of her nerves and heart, which was such that it seemed to her that the slightest indulgence to them would render them independent of all control.

It is scarcely too much to say, that from that moment, until the time arrived for her to lead her brother forth, the unconscious object of so

serious an experiment on his shattered constitution, the unfortunate girl was in a high fever. She neither ate nor slept; and, strange to say, she scarcely ever in the same interval of time prayed so little. Frequently, indeed, through the remainder of that evening and next day, whenever she found herself alone, she would fall upon her knees, cast up her hands and eyes to Heaven, and then bow her throbbing forehead to the earth; but it was rather in the energy of great excitement, that seemed instinctively to ask for pity and composure from above, than a rational prayer for a blessing on her undertaking;—she was literally unable to tell to Heaven or to herself that she had indeed determined on that undertaking.

Lady Luscombe happened to drive over to Beauton Park that day. As they sat at luncheon, Mr. Evelyn, observing the alternate absence and flutter of Gertrude's spirits, said abruptly, "You have not brought Gertrude home much better than she left us, Lady Luscombe."

“No !” she exclaimed in astonishment : “why, I flattered myself she was quite another creature. She certainly was, in Paris. Perhaps, Gertrude, you are pining after your agreeable count, eh ?”

The vivid blush which conscience called into the cheeks of Gertrude at this malapropos sally, could not pass unnoticed. “Nay, never blush and look miserable about it,” pursued her friend ; “you know I am no tell-tale. Only make haste and forget him before a certain gallant soldier returns.”

“She had better make good haste then,” said her father, looking at her with some surprise ; “for he may be here sooner than she thinks for.”

“I hope not, sir ! How do you mean ?” exclaimed Gertrude, turning to him in an alarm which she had not presence of mind to conceal.

Mr. Evelyn stared still more at her ; but she, recollecting herself, quickly added, “He pro-

mised not to make any attempt to see me until six months should have elapsed."

"Yes; but ladies seldom quarrel with such vows being forgotten."

"*I should,*" she said very seriously. "Have you any reason, sir, to think Major Vandeleur will?"

"Nonsense, you silly girl! I mean that the six months are nearly over now; so we may lawfully expect his return, even on your own absurd terms."

"But he will of course write before he comes; don't you think so, sir?"

"Indeed, you know best what order you have him in."

"Well, good people," said Lady Luscombe, rising, "I must leave you to discuss that knotty point without my assistance, seeing I could no longer give unprejudiced advice to young ladies; so good-b'ye."

She drove off, and Gertrude retired to her chamber.

“Oh, that Godfrey had been here ! or Mr. Mason alive !” she now exclaimed to herself, with blanched and trembling lips. “Nothing should now prevent my telling them all. But it is all too late for that, and there is no one else whose judgment I could trust to. Oh, why did I not think of this before ! Yet this is nothing more than nervous weakness ; for have I not weighed the matter long and anxiously enough ?”

Then she would recapitulate to herself the most forcible of the arguments employed by De l’Espoir, and always concluded with saying, “At all events, he pledges himself it can do no harm.”

Alas ! those pledges ! they are like the bond offered by the ruined spendthrift to borrow yet another sum, and may indeed prove availing to those who can be satisfied by revenge instead of payment, but are therefore most frequently offered to those who, with perhaps a broken heart, would cast them into the fire on finding their worthlessness.

At dinner Gertrude found it absolutely impossible to swallow one single morsel : the tension had extended from her heart up to her throat ; her face was exceedingly flushed ; and as she handed something at table to her father, and their hands met, such was the damp and death-like coldness of hers, that he looked up and exclaimed, “ Why, Gertrude, you certainly cannot be well, child—what is the matter ? ”

Will it be believed that the poor girl was so overcome—so oppressed with her lonely and awful secret, that she was upon the very point of bursting into tears, throwing herself into—even her father’s arms—and revealing all ? But even while she struggled for strength to make the effort, the remembrance of her promise came over her, and the inconsistency of her conduct appeared glaring in her eyes. She *gulped* down her tears, and pleading a severe headache, said she would stroll out into the air, which she was certain would refresh her.

“ Well, do so,” said Mr. Evelyn : “ and harkye, Gertrude, as the evening is so fine, I wish you would take Herbert with you,—I think it would do him good.”

Gertrude felt guilty as she answered, “ I will, sir.”

“ But come here, dear ; I positively insist upon your taking this glass of Madeira. Why, you are absolutely trembling, and as cold as death.”

“ Indeed, sir, I would rather not ; I cannot swallow just now.”

“ Nonsense, child !——one can swallow wine when one cannot anything else. Here, I insist upon your taking it ;—why, you are now as pale as you were red this moment.”

Gertrude took the wine, and left the dining-room, knowing that—her hour was come !

CHAPTER XIV.

Why do you bend such solemn brows on me ?

Think ye I bear the shears of Destiny ?

Have I commandment on the pulse of life ?

SHAKSPEARE.

HAD it been possible that, by some infernal machination of the Enemy of Mankind, the gentle, exquisitely feeling, and devoted sister, who would have sacrificed life, and fame itself, for the recovery of her brother, could, instead, have been wrought upon, for some deadly purpose, to work out his destruction, and that the moment for action was now at hand, Gertrude could not have trembled more violently, or felt a stronger beating at her heart, than when she now repaired to that brother's apartment to try to wile him

out to the destined scene, as she hoped, of his restoration to health and unclouded reason, by telling him of the loveliness of the spring evening, the delicious odours which that evening's breeze was rifling from the profusion of flowers all around, and the sweet singing of the birds, of which Herbert was always so particularly fond, that even yet he frequently dragged himself across his chamber to scatter crumbs outside his window for their support.

This happened to be one of his days of bodily debility, and his intellects, accordingly, seemed a little clearer. He looked towards the window, and then at Gertrude, as if there was a slight struggle between his feeling of exhaustion and his desire to yield to her wishes; but, as usual, the latter prevailed. His room had of late, since the weather had become finer, been changed, at Gertrude's suggestion, for one on the ground-floor, which had once been used as a breakfast-parlour, in order to save him

the fatigue or annoyance of being conveyed up and down stairs.

She now directed his garden-chair to be brought to the hall-door. As soon as he was seated in it, the servant who brought it asked if he should be required to wheel him. "No," Gertrude said; "I shall wheel him myself."

She frequently had done so; but this evening, as they passed close outside the dining-room, Mr. Evelyn hurried to the window, and throwing it up, exclaimed, "Now, Gertrude, why do you wheel that chair when you are so ill with headache? You really are very—very perverse.—Here, William," he called aloud, as he saw the man standing at the door,—“here; wheel Mr. Herbert about with Miss Evelyn.”

"My dear father, pray, no," said Gertrude, terrified and unhappy; "the servants are just going to dinner; and besides, Herbert and I would much rather be without them."

"Well, wheel that chair you *shall not*," he said peremptorily, for of late his temper had

acquired an irritability to which it was formerly a stranger. "Oh ! there's Miss Wilson. Here, Miss Wilson ; wheel Herbert's chair a bit, will you ? Gertrude is not able ;" and he shut down the window.

Gertrude was too happy to exchange the presence of the servant for one over whose very thoughts she felt she held control, to make any farther opposition ; and determining to dismiss her when they should come to the entrance of the old garden, she suffered her to wheel the chair so far.

" Thank you, Miss Wilson, that will do now ; Herbert and I will saunter about here for a little, but we will not trouble you any farther."

" Shall I wait, or return to wheel him home ?"

" Neither, thank you. My head is already better from the air, and I shall wheel him home myself : and don't mention to my father or any one where I am. Now, observe what I say ; because I do not wish to be intruded on, and

my father is too anxious about my headache ; so don't go in his way until I return."

Miss Wilson departed.

Gertrude and Herbert were now at what had once been the gate of the pleasure-garden ; and within it, at some little distance, stood an arbour, formed in the high and close beechen hedge which enclosed the garden, and which was sheltered by a grove behind. The arbour was spacious, having been in former days frequently used by the children and their young friends in their feasts of fruit and flower-gathering ; and the seats and benches used by them in those happy hallowed hours were still standing within it. The luxuriance and order of beauty around was all faded and gone—but still, as “ many a garden-flower grew wild”—and as fragrant weeds were also in profusion about—such as wild geranium, thyme, and heaths of various kinds, it was a spot particularly frequented by bees, as its solitude caused it to be by birds.—And as the youthful and innocent pair, who once seemed

the Abel and the Adah of this earthly paradise, now entered it together—she for such a purpose—and he the unconscious object of that purpose,—there was something more than commonly interesting in the scene altogether:—that ruined garden, which still told of beauty past; and that shattered being, where still there lingered traces of mental and of personal perfection.

It had a powerful effect upon the feelings of Gertrude, as she thought upon the days of their childhood; when, two lovely and intelligent beings, they would, hand in hand, run on before their parents and attendants, until arrested by some trifling object, perhaps a pebble or a flower still new to them. The little girl, though perhaps equally attracted, would generally have been satisfied with wondering; while the more reflecting boy would run back with the object of his curiosity, have it explained by his attendants, and return to impart the information to his sister.

She remembered all this, for the same tenden-

cies had continued with little alteration in both ; and painfully, dreadfully did she now feel the contrast. There he sat, looking around him indeed, as if something struck him in the scene ; but it was only with that listless look that might have become infancy itself, when first the mother fondly tries to anticipate the dawning of intelligence ! And as a bird suddenly whistled a loud note in their ears, as if to ask the cause of their intrusion, or a bee buzzed past them as if to reconnoitre, he would look up at her and smile—a smile that literally appeared to dissolve her heart.

It was already past the appointed hour, and Gertrude caught a glimpse of De l'Espoir about the arbour. As, however, it was thought expedient that he should not appear to Herbert, in order to avoid any flurry to his spirits, the moment he perceived them at the gate he retired to the farther side, where, while the branches prevented him from being seen by those within, he should be near enough, not

only to superintend and support Gertrude in the event of any agitation or alarm, but even to hear all that should be spoken.

All villain as he was, he could not feel wholly unmoved, as he peered forth from his hiding-place in impatience at the delay: for some feeling inexplicable to herself, where she now again felt confident of success, had made Gertrude unwilling to hurry Herbert to his fate. De l'Espoir saw them at length enter the garden, Herbert leaning on his sister's arm, having at her suggestion left his chair, and undertaken to walk the few paces that remained. He was obliged to confess to himself that few things could be more affecting than their appearance at that moment. They were both deadly pale; but while the quiet repose in the beautiful countenance of the one showed that paleness to be the consequence of ill health, the almost convulsive though restrained agitation of the not less beautiful features of the other, only told of the wild tumult within.

She tried to pray, but could not ; every step or movement of her precious charge recalled her thoughts to earth ; and, with nervous anxiety, she felt desirous to guard or shield him from the slightest uneasiness, unwilling, as it were, to add one tittle to the trial that awaited him ; as if she had not risked her dearest hopes on that trial ! She had—but still her good sense sometimes whispered her, that what was powerful for good might be powerful for evil !—At these moments her prayers were comprised in the exclamation, “ My God ! my God ! ” and one time she was so carried away by her feelings, as hastily to clasp her hands together, forgetful of the poor invalid, who leaned heavily on her arm, and whom this hasty movement of hers shook off, and caused to totter a few paces.

Had Gertrude wantonly intended to distress or incommode him, instead of being rendered momentarily incautious by the very intensity of her anxiety concerning him, she could not have felt more remorse than she did when she saw his

debility, and the gentle expression of his countenance, as it seemed to ask why he was thus cast off. She flung her arms around him, as if to repay him doubly for the momentary withdrawal of her support, and laying her head on his shoulder, asked him to forgive her, while a flood of tears came to the relief of her pent-up emotions.

It always seemed as if the sight of Gertrude in affliction, had power to overcome the listlessness of Herbert's malady for the moment. He now bent and kissed her cheek, and then attempting to wipe away her tears, said, "Dearest Gertrude !"

She pressed her arm more fondly round him. "Say you forgive me, Herbert !" she exclaimed ; and then yielding to the torrent of feelings which her tears had given a vent to, she fell on her knees, and with a wild earnestness, which was far more appropriate to the impending, than the past offence against him, and which indeed was probably dictated by a vague anticipation of what the future might bring forth, she seized

his hand, and looking up in his face with a countenance of agony, repeated, "Herbert, will you not say you forgive me?"

The poor boy gazed on her with more of astonishment and intelligence than he usually exhibited, but could make no farther exertion than to repeat, "Yes, indeed." She was obliged to be content, and they proceeded to the arbour.

Herbert immediately sat down upon one of the old benches that remained there ; and Gertrude, perceiving that he seemed, as was usual after the slightest mental exertion, to sink into a dreamy sort of languor, left him for a moment to receive her final instructions from the count.

She found him considerably less animated, if not less composed, than was his wont, and instantly caught alarm from the change. But he, perceiving this effect of his remorse, or weakness as he termed it himself, instantly chased it away by running over in his mind some of those sedatives, of which the human heart has so large a

store, ever ready to soothe again the startled conscience. They conversed for a few moments, when he contrived to reassure the flagging spirits of his luckless pupil, and going over again the most minute descriptions and instructions respecting the routine of gentle and monotonous movements, so especially calculated to induce sleep, or *somnambulism*, as it is technically called, he dismissed her, with a blessing, to commence her awful task.

Gertrude returned to the arbour. She gazed for a moment on the gentle, unconscious object of all that was going on, so vitally important to him ; and turning aside for a moment, once more to raise her eyes and hands beseechingly to Heaven, she drew a seat in front of his, and composed her spirits to commence the operation.

Nothing can be more simple and less influential than the process of magnetising would seem to be ; the entire exertion, and power, being in the mind and will of the magnetiser. The subtile fluid is supposed to be conveyed by the mere

rendering of the object passive enough to receive it,—that is, by lulling to repose whatever of his own faculties might be supposed so active as to resist it. For this purpose, the first movement is to take the hands of the patient, and gently pressing them, retain them in that position as long as may be deemed necessary, according to the state of the patient and other attending circumstances, before proceeding to the other methods of diffusion of the fluid.

This caressing movement from his kind sister, was of course received by poor Herbert merely as one of her usual testimonials of affection, the more perhaps as it was now accompanied with an intense look of tenderness and anxiety. Even when she changed that movement for the less familiar and more active ones, of passing the hands from the head downwards over the person of the patient, but without actual contact, though he at first stared a little anxiously at her, he finally smiled, and appeared rather to enjoy what he probably innocently conceived was done merely for his amusement !

I have said that the evening was soft, balmy, and genial ; the twitter of birds—the hum of bees—and the perfume of flowers, was about ; the spot selected was still and secluded. How far all these circumstances might have tended to produce a disposition to somnolency in the invalid boy, we may not determine ; but certain it is that Gertrude had not many minutes continued her softly lulling movements about him, when his gentle eyes began to look heavy, the transparent lids presently drooped over them, and he seemed overcome by slumber !—It was the desired effect ; yet poor Gertrude, with youthful inconsistency, felt as much alarmed at this proof of her power, as it were, over her brother's constitution, as if she had never hoped, prayed, laboured, suffered for it.

“ He sleeps !” she said softly to De l'Espoir.

“ Already !” was the reply, in a tone of pleasure.

But, although subdued almost to a whisper in order not to arouse the boy, the strange

voice, proceeding from directly behind him, not only scared away what probably had not yet been sleep, but caused him to start up and look around him with a wilder expression of countenance than he had ever before exhibited, and he uttered a faint shriek.

Gertrude became terrified, and deeply affected; but remembering the reiterated cautions she had received never to suffer him for a moment to remain under the influence of terror, she commanded herself, and proceeded to endeavour once more to soothe and compose him, by a repetition of what had already so completely produced that effect. It would not do—the spirit of alarm was roused in the poor boy—he looked first inquiringly, then wildly, on her hands flitting about him; a universal tremour took possession of him.

Gertrude, as we have said, had been particularly cautioned against suffering her own feelings to overcome her, so as to induce her to stop suddenly in her operations, probably to the

serious injury of her patient. Accordingly, although her heart was almost breaking, she forced herself to continue her operations, only rendering them as gentle, and even expressively affectionate, as was in her power. It would not do—his eyes continued rapidly and wildly to follow her hands—he glanced at her face and saw tears falling slowly over it. For a moment or two, he seemed as if spell-bound to his seat—but, in the next, he shuddered convulsively, and fell fainting into her arms !

Gertrude shrieked out to De l'Espoir, who immediately came to her assistance, and imploring of her to subdue her feelings, and not unfit her mind for her undertaking, assured her that everything was going on as well as possible. "He is merely overcharged with magnetic fluid," he said, "and we will soon relieve him of that ;" and he proceeded to go through the process prescribed for that purpose.

For some time it did not appear to produce the slightest effect. De l'Espoir became alarm-

ed, and his manner evinced flurry and agitation. Happily, Gertrude was too much wrapped up in watching her brother, that she might welcome the first symptom of returning animation, to observe him. Besides, there are some anticipations so dreadful, that the mind positively refuses to receive them. Accordingly, she stood calmly by, not daring to admit the slightest apprehension of danger.

Seeing, however, that time was passing, and that the count's attempts to restore her brother's consciousness seemed to fail, she asked, in a tone almost sarcastic from subdued alarm, if she might apply her smelling-bottle to his nose. De l'Espoir made no objection; and whether it was from the influence of the pungent salts, or the manipulations of the count, or whether from a mere effort of nature, it boots not to inquire, but in a very few minutes the boy began to show symptoms of returning animation.

And now it is that the darkest cloud of un-

certainly hangs over the real wishes and intentions of the Count de l'Espoir. There can be no question that, with the first symptom of the unfortunate youth's recovery from the swoon into which terror had thrown him, the safest plan, in common cases, would have been for De l'Espoir to have withdrawn himself from his sight, and suffered that terror gradually to subside by the absence of the excitement. But whether it was that he really believed that it was his manipulations and operations which alone had commenced, and could perfect his recovery,—or whether his previous alarm had so far bewildered him as to cause his judgment at the moment to err,—or whether that apparent alarm had merely been the agitation that the worst of human beings must have felt, at seeing the near accomplishment of such hellish plans ;—certain it is, that, instead of withdrawing himself, he recommenced his gesticulations and movements round the boy more vigorously than ever ; so that when the un-

fortunate youth opened his eyes, he found himself still surrounded by, and subjected to, the same frightful and bewildering incantations,—and not now from his gentle favourite, but from a dark and foreign-looking stranger.

It was too much for his weak and shattered nerves and intellects to resist. He looked wildly and despairingly around him for his sister: she stood at a little distance, with fast cold tears pouring over her quivering lips and cheeks, but not venturing to interrupt the count in his operations. In that agonised moment, nature, habit, long association asserted their power—and as a bird, when pursued by the cruel hawk, has been known to seek shelter in the breast of man—so, though poor wretched Gertrude had been made the instrument first to inspire her brother with that cruel terror, instinct told him she was not his enemy — and, in the moment of his mortal agony, he no sooner caught a glimpse of her, than he shrieked “Gertrude ! Gertrude !” in a voice that might

have waked the dead by its piercing and helpless anguish—and making an effort to fling himself towards her, a fearful struggle overcame him—it became convulsive—he wrestled with it for a moment—and then—his pure and harassed spirit was at rest for ever !

No one who has once seen Death can ever again mistake his fearful aspect. De l'Espoir knew at a glance that the boy was dead ; but there are some young spirits so full of life themselves, never having seen, scarcely having thought on or believed in death, that they refuse to acknowledge it on its first appearance, especially if it assume the features of one they love. Such was the case with Gertrude : she flung her arms about her brother—alas ! around her brother's corpse — and kissing his lips and chafing his hands, endeavoured to revive him.

The count, distressed and alarmed, approached her. “ Away ! away ! ” she cried, waving him off with her hand, but looking not up from

her occupation,—“ Away ! he shall be terrified no more. Fool, fool that I was ! at the moment too when reason seemed dawning on him ! ”

He caught at the words. “ Know you not, my dearest young lady, that such is generally the forerunner of—of—— ”

“ Of death ? ” shrieked Gertrude, in a tone of interrogation. “ He shall not die ! God would not so deal with me. ” And then heating and stirring up the powerful salts, she again held them to his nose.

But this time it was in vain — and every moment was making it evident and more evident that Herbert Evelyn had passed away. Some vague feeling of this was forcing its way into Gertrude’s heart, but she would not listen to it. “ Here,” she called to De l’Espoir, in hurried but commanding accents, — “ Here — perhaps he is overcharged with magnetic fluid ; relieve him from it again as you did before. ”

And she rose from her knees to make way for him.

De l'Espoir was now unaffectedly shocked, as well as terrified ; nothing else could have detained him so long in so perilous a situation. He approached Gertrude, and taking her hand, gave her to understand, with such precaution as the time and scene admitted of, that no earthly power could now restore her brother !

When Gertrude had first entered the arbour, she had thrown aside her bonnet ; and in the subsequent agitating scenes, her long dark hair had escaped from its confinement, and fell in unheeded profusion about her face and neck. Any object will serve the overwrought nerves to exhaust their energy upon. She now twisted her hands in her dishevelled tresses, and with eyes far started from their sockets, cheeks of a ghastly paleness, from which they never afterwards perfectly recovered, and lips as white, and literally foaming from the gasping manner

in which her breath forced out its passage, she stood before De l'Espoir on the very verge of madness ! She uttered not a shriek, or word, or sound, except one long protracted articulation of the interrogatory monosyllable, " A—y—" and continued fixedly gazing on him, as if to save herself from ocular demonstration of the overwhelming fact.

De l'Espoir, all villain as he was, felt at that moment that Gertrude and her estates were dearly purchased, and literally shuddered at the sight of the state to which his machinations had reduced that lovely pair. He approached the unfortunate surviving victim in this moment of awakened feeling, and clasping her in his arms, of which she not only appeared, but in reality was, utterly unconscious, he whispered every tender epithet he could think of, mingled with anxious hints that nothing now remained for her but to fly with him, and find consolation in his devoted affection. Had it been the rattlesnake itself which had exerted its baneful influence to

subdue her spirit to its own destruction, Gertrude could not have remained more utterly unmoved, and seemingly insensible of all he uttered.

He was at a loss how to understand her silence and abstraction, for she neither shed a tear, nor breathed a sigh, but continued to gaze on him with a glassy eye, when his attention was most fearfully diverted from her by the voices of persons close at hand.

It has been mentioned that the garden was neglected of late years; and the walks, overgrown with weeds and grass, returned no echo to the foot as it fell upon them; so that ere De l'Espoir had time to look round, even without changing his position, two gentlemen already stood within the entrance of the harbour. The age of the one, and the strong resemblance which his handsome features bore to Gertrude and her brother, and the military travelling dress, together with something remembered of the former appearance of the other, served to

convince him at a glance that he stood confronted with the father and the lover of her, and the father and intended brother of him whom he had destroyed.

Gertrude also recognised them at the same instant, as was evident from a certain undefinable expression which struggled through the rigidity that had taken possession of her features. But although De l'Espoir had mechanically released her from his embrace the moment he perceived them, instead of making any attempt to address them, or evincing the slightest surprise at the unexpected appearance of her lover, she merely pointed downwards with terrific calmness to the body of her brother, which still lay stretched where it had fallen. Hitherto she had avoided looking towards it, as if yet resisting the dreadful conviction ; but now her eyes uncontrollably lighted upon it. She gazed and gasped wildly and loudly for a moment, as if she would scare away Death itself ; then flinging herself, or ra-

ther suffering herself to fall with violence on the body, she shrieked “ Herbert? Herbert?” in so heart-rending a tone of interrogation, as caused every one present involuntarily to press their hands on their ears; and would, indeed, had one spark of life remained, have called it forth to tell her she had not done the deed. The voice was one of loud and distracted appeal—almost, you would have said, reproachful, in its shrill agony: but, no, no,—that heart which would have responded to soothe her was hushed for ever, and she found indeed that she but addressed

“ The dull cold ear of death.”

Mr. Evelyn and Major Vandeleur, who had from the moment of their hasty entrance literally stood transfixed with horror, and as if rooted to the earth, were restored to consciousness, or at least to motion, by Gertrude’s wild scream: and although Vandeleur was certainly at the moment assailed by, perhaps, all the most dreadful feelings to which man is liable, when

he beheld his betrothed bride apparently receiving the caresses of another, and her only brother, his beloved friend, lying at the same time a corpse at her feet ; still, when he heard that soul-drawn shriek, and saw her, in her hopelessness of awaking her brother, seize his cold hand and press her throbbing forehead into it, his own burning anguish was lost in pity for her, and he made an attempt to go forward to raise her from so dreadful a position. But the unfortunate father, whose feelings he had overlooked, at the same moment seized his arm to keep himself from falling, and, after two or three ineffectual attempts to speak, at last uttered, in a sort of hoarse whisper, the words, “ Ask them—ask them what it is.”

When Vandeleur and Mr. Evelyn entered the harbour, De l'Espoir's back was towards them ; and although he instantly turned round, Vandeleur had already seen that which made everything and everybody else a matter of little moment to him ; and, in fact, he had as yet not

raised his eyes from Gertrude and her brother. On this appeal of the wretched father, he slowly and loathingly turned them to the stranger. Memory for a moment deserted him, although something in the whole appearance was familiar to him. It was but for a moment : his eye soon ran greedily over the dark and handsome countenance—the tall and gentlemanly figure : its pupil visibly began to contract ; he drew his breath inwards for a moment—took one more scrutinizing survey—then dismissing every remaining doubt, slowly and emphatically pronounced the words, “ So ! my schoolfellow, De Brons ! ”

De l'Espoir, whose feelings towards his fated rival did not require the additional exasperation of the haughty or contemptuous survey he had been obliged to undergo, touched his hat as haughtily, and feeling that concealment was at an end, replied, “ The Count De l'Espoir, sir.”

“ Then, Count De l'Espoir, M. De Brons, or whatever name may suit you now, in God's

name, what is the meaning of the scene that is now before us?"

De l'Espoir hesitated for a moment; he felt that his fate through life depended wholly upon his conduct in this interview — almost upon his next answer. He took his resolution. "That it is a strange scene and an afflicting one to you, sir,—if you are, as I judge, Major Vandeleur,—I can imagine : nevertheless, from me you can receive no explanation of it. Your right to demand it at my hands I might question ; but, instead, I tell you for your own sake to forbear the inquiry ;" and he threw into his countenance a sinister and hellish expression.

"This will not avail your purpose, sir : you forget you speak to one who knows you of old : account for your clandestine, unauthorised appearance here under such fearful circumstances, or the vengeance with which I shall visit you where you stand, shall send your infamy to the very ends of the earth."

"Vengeance for what, sir?" asked De l'Espoir with startling coolness.

“For what, sir? Can you look before you and ask for what?”

De l'Espoir smiled a cold and meaning smile ; but ere Vandeleur had time to ask again what that meaning was, Gertrude, who had remained with her forehead only kept from the cold earth by her brother's hand—almost as cold—but which was kept from becoming utterly so by the few scalding tears that escaped from her eyes without her consciousness,—on hearing Vandeleur's loud and angry tones, raised her head from its position, and looking up at her father, said, in a kind of confidential, hissing whisper, which fell like molten lead drops upon the nerves of all present, “*Father ! I did it !*”

It was neither madness nor idiocy which dictated these fearful words ; it was simply that her mind was so shattered—so decomposed, as it were,—that it admitted but of the one overwhelming idea, and that to be expressed in its simplest form. Every one made some involuntary movement expressive of his horror at her gate : her father, ever more partial to his son

than to his daughter, seemed to recoil from her even for the very words.

De l'Espoir looked at her with an expression of pity evidently intended to be observed ; while Vandeleur, feeling that, whatever had been her fault, her sufferings now atoned for it, advanced to her, and forcibly raising her from the ground, (for she would have resisted his efforts,) implored her, by every feeling that ever was dear to her, to compose herself, and try to give them some account of what had happened. As his voice and manner resumed something of its former tone and tenderness, it seemed to produce some little effect upon her recollection ; for, turning her head towards him as he supported her, she looked in his face with a kind of inquiring and softening curiosity.

He repeated his entreaties. “ Oh, Godfrey ! Godfrey ! ” she said gently, but without any particular expression ; but as her eye again glanced at the body of her brother, she grew wilder, and raising herself from his supporting arms, she

seized his wrists in her hands as if for security, and said, "Well, Godfrey, what would you with the fratricide? Have I not already told my father?"—and with terrifying distinctness and solemnity she repeated the words — "*I—killed—my brother!*"

She finished with a faint sound, something between a sigh, a shriek, and a moan of heart-sick despair. Godfrey himself, although convinced that grief had disordered her intellects, now started as far back as the strange and nervous grasp she had taken of his wrists would admit of; but her father, whom nothing of the kind restrained, and who was wrought up to absolute frenzy between De l'Espoir's insinuations and her own confessions, made a stride towards her, and, had not Vandeleur, with a wrench releasing his hands, sprung up in time to arrest him, would have struck her to the earth!

The unfortunate girl, whose intellects had already been shaken almost to imbecility, was

now finally bewildered and overwhelmed. She had felt her lover start from her;—she saw her father lift his arm to strike her, and at the same moment felt Vandeleur wrench his hands from her grasp.—In her terror she mistook the object of his sudden and violent movement, and only feeling that she was condemned and abandoned by the world, and that De l'Espoir alone could bear witness to her motives, she fled with a shriek towards him to ask that explanation ; but, ere she could utter a syllable, fell fainting into his arms.

This was too much for Vandeleur to bear. He sprang towards her to drag her from her hateful resting-place ; but De l'Espoir, coolly drawing a pistol from his breast, (which, anticipating the possibility of some interruption, he had brought with him,) cocked it on the instant, and told him to advance a step farther at his peril.

Vandeleur, already infuriated, and only rendered desperate by this threat, closed with him instantly, and attempted to wrench the weapon

from his hand. De l'Espoir fired, and the contents lodged in Major Vandeleur's right side and hip. He fell instantly, utterly disabled, but called out to Mr. Evelyn to secure the ruffian whom alone he believed to be the author of all the misery around them.

De l'Espoir smiled contemptuously, and, producing another loaded pistol, convinced them how useless any farther opposition to his will must prove.

In this cruel dilemma Mr. Evelyn knew not what to do. Vandeleur's life-blood seemed welling from his wound, fearfully stimulated by his agitation; and as he was already becoming faint, it was evident that in a few minutes more he would, if unassisted, be little better than Herbert was himself. He saw that there was no chance of saving him but by hurrying to the house and summoning that assistance; yet, unwilling to leave De l'Espoir sole guardian of all he held dear on earth, though without Vandeleur's reasons for suspecting his worst

designs, he said, "Man, whoever you are, or whatever your intentions, at least convey my daughter to the house, since you will not leave her ; and there let us, if possible, understand each other."

De l'Espoir indulged in another of his sardonic sneers. "Would it not be as well to know the young lady's own wishes upon that subject first ?" he asked. "Methinks you have seen enough already to make you at least doubt that such would be her choice ;" and he looked down on the lovely form which still lay lifeless on his arm.

Vandeleur, though now speechless, seemed not yet to have lost all consciousness, for he was seen to writhe, and even heard to utter a faint moan.

"By Heaven, it is too true !" said Mr. Evelyn, relapsing into fury against his unfortunate daughter, which had for the moment been so fearfully diverted : "and this explains what Lady Luscombe hinted, and her own horror of

Vandeleur's return. D—n me if another valuable life shall be lost by her ! and I care not if I ever see her again !” So saying, he left the harbour as hastily as his limbs, shaking and tottering from agitation, would admit of.

He was no sooner out of sight, than De l'Espoir, raising the wretched Gertrude in his arms, regardless of a convulsive movement and a hoarse cry from her still more wretched lover, bore her from the harbour before his eyes, and across the fields to an opening from the road, where he had a post-carriage and four horses in waiting, merely on the chance of their being required that evening.

Nearly an hour necessarily elapsed before Mr. Evelyn returned with the servants ; and by that time Vandeleur was not only speechless, but apparently without life or motion. No trace of the fugitives of course remained ; and Mr. Evelyn, really feeling, as he said, indifferent about ever seeing his wretched daughter again, and believing De l'Espoir to be her choice, de-

ferred, in the confusion that ensued, all active search after her, until the travellers had indeed gained such an advantage as to elude all chance of being overtaken. We shall therefore leave them in unmolested progress on their journey, and in the next chapter endeavour to account for the sudden and unexpected return of Major Vandeleur.

CHAPTER XV.

Yet do I live?—O how shall I sustain
This vast, unutterable weight of woe,—
This worse than hunger, poverty, or pain,
Or all the complicated ills below !
She in whose life my hopes were treasured all
Is gone. She lives on some far happier shore ;—
She lives—but, cruel thought ! she lives to me no more !

SHAWE.

HERBERT EVELYN had been visibly declining in bodily strength for some time before his father thought it necessary to inform Gertrude of the circumstance. With Major Vandeleur, however, he was less reserved ; and to him he communicated that Mr. C——, in his last visit, had expressed his apprehensions that the boy's constitution was giving way ; but reiterated his charges to Major Vandeleur, not to cloud Gertrude's present enjoyment by imparting news

for which she could point out no remedy. In this, as may be supposed, Vandeleur fully acquiesced.

When poor Mr. Mason died, Mr. Evelyn wrote to Vandeleur again; but having no system in his proceedings, and not excelling in epistolary talents, he omitted to mention to him his determination now to inform Gertrude of the truth, and to summon her home. Accordingly, Major Vandeleur had no prospect before his mind's eye but his beloved young friend, left to the cares of those he knew to be very incompetent to the task; and as Gertrude's last letter to him made no mention of any time for her return, though only a few weeks now remained of his probationary period, he thought his best plan would be to procure his leave at once; to proceed in person to watch over Herbert; and if Gertrude continued inexorable about seeing him before the stated time, he settled to go to London for the very few days that he thought it probable would remain between the time of her return and the expiration of the six

months. Mrs. Whitecross's letter reached him, but it added not one spur to his impatience to return ; so perfect and undoubting was his confidence in her truth and affection : and he merely attributed it to the well-meaning, but vulgar mind of an officious woman, who saw a lover in every man of more than ordinary civility.

In pursuance of this plan, he wrote to Mr. Evelyn, saying he would be at Beauton very soon after his letter ; but, in his turn, desiring him not to write this his intention to Gertrude, as, in consequence of her prohibition, it would require all his own eloquence to procure his pardon.

Mr. Evelyn paid very little regard to all such prohibitions, and especially from his daughter ; and that he did not inform her of it, was much more in order to procure himself the pleasure—or, as he termed it, the “capital fun”—of their mutual surprise, than in obedience either to her wishes, or even to those of Vandeleur. Still, as the time drew near, he attempted

to hint it to her; but her reception of that hint, though only making him more determined to laugh and set at nought such whims, had the effect of making him avoid any discussion upon the subject. How he afterwards interpreted her exclamation on that occasion is already evident.

Gertrude had not long set out upon her fatal expedition with her brother, when Major Vandeleur arrived. His first inquiries were of course for Herbert.

Mr. Evelyn said he was out.

“Out! I’m glad to hear he is able to be out. Who is with him?”

Mr. Evelyn stammered for a moment; then, recollecting himself, said—“Miss Wilson. But come, and we’ll look for them: they cannot, I’m sure, have gone far.”

Vandeleur, heartily pitying his poor young friend for being consigned to the companionship of so obtuse a being as Miss Wilson, readily agreed to set out in quest of him.

They searched several of the walks in vain;

but at length Miss Wilson appeared in sight. "Why, is not that Miss Wilson?" said Vandeleur. "What can she have done with Herbert?" But turning to Mr. Evelyn, and seeing no alarm in his countenance or manner, he only hastened his steps to meet her.

Miss Wilson, however, on perceiving them, remembered Miss Evelyn's injunction to her, and turned to avoid them. Mr. Evelyn called after her: she affected deafness and held on her course, for obedience was the alpha and omega of her code of duty; in fact, it seemed as if she could never of her own free will resist whatever impulse was last given to her. Mr. Evelyn, however, had no mind to resign his share of this her single virtue; he therefore called again, and hastened his steps almost to a run.

Vandeleur, concluding that it was the sight of him which had scared her, laughingly paused, to suffer Mr. Evelyn to come up with her alone; but the odd creature actually pursued her way, unmindful of his repeated calls, even when he

was close behind her, until he was absolutely obliged to seize her by the shoulder to stop her.

“What is the meaning of this, Miss Wilson? Why the devil don’t you stop or answer when you are called? Where is Miss Evelyn?”

“I don’t know, sir.”

“You don’t know! Why, didn’t I tell you to wheel Herbert’s chair?”

“I did, sir.”

“Where to?” A dead pause. “Why don’t you speak? Has anything happened?”

“No, sir; no, indeed.”

“Then, d—n it! why don’t you give me an answer?” and his manner grew irritable as it was wont of late to be.

Miss Wilson was frightened; and not having art enough for any evasion, though silence was her forte, she now answered—“Miss Evelyn, sir, bid me not tell you where she was.”

“How! And where’s Mr. Herbert?”

“With her, sir.”

“Tush, you idiot!” he half muttered and half pronounced. “Well, I insist on knowing where

they are. Speak this moment, I command you."

"I wheeled Mr. Herbert, sir," she now whimpered, "to the gate of the old East-garden, and I left them there."

"Well, go—to the devil!" he said; but we will hope that, as he had the grace only to finish the sentence as he turned to rejoin Major Vandeleur, she escaped without hearing her destination, lest in that moment of her obedience being enlisted on Mr. Evelyn's side, she might have thought it her duty to obey him to the letter.

"Well, have you made out about Herbert?" asked Vandeleur.

"Oh yes, I have. Come on. She left him in the East-garden."

"What, alone!"

"Oh no: never mind; ask no questions."

Vandeleur stopped short in his walk, and fixed his eyes on his companion. "Is it possible?" he asked, suddenly and anxiously.

"Nonsense! is what possible?"

"*Is Gertrude here?*"

“D—n that Miss Wilson !” was the reply ;
“only for her you never would have guessed.”

“ My dear sir, what had she to do with it ?
I heard not a word that passed between you : I
assure you it was entirely your own manner be-
trayed you. But is it really the case that my
dear love is here already ?”

“ Ay, but *she* flurried my manner, the wretch !
and put me off my guard. Indeed it was Ger-
trude’s own doing at bottom.”

“ Does she then know I am coming ?”

“ No, not she ; but, in one of her whims, she
desired that idiot not to tell me where she was.”
And he spoke so peevishly from being disap-
pointed of the full enjoyment of the double sur-
prise he had planned, that Vandeleur thought
the sooner he removed his sweet bride out of
his power the better. Nothing, however, could
at that moment long damp the rapture he
felt at finding her so near him ; and seeing
nothing in what her father called her whim, but
some little innocent device of her playful spirit,

he with infinite difficulty restrained his steps to Mr. Evelyn's pace.

Of the scene that awaited them the reader is already aware, and it is needless to go over it again.

It is quite impossible to convey any idea of the consternation of the servants, on Mr. Evelyn's return to the house, at the almost incredible events that had taken place in one short hour, or very little more : their young master dead, no one knew how—their young lady eloped with a stranger of whom no one had ever heard—and Major Vandeleur returned unexpectedly within that hour, and now apparently a corpse likewise !

One and all they followed Mr. Evelyn back to the harbour, except Mrs. Whitecross, whom her young lady had sent on some commission from which she had not yet returned ; and Miss Wilson, who, fearful alike of meeting Mr. Evelyn or his daughter, had extended her walk beyond her wont.

When at length Mrs. Whitecross did return,

she was amazed at the unusual stillness that pervaded the yard and out-offices of the house. Recollecting, however, that it was about the servants' dinner-hour, she entered their eating apartment. There she found the remains of their dinner indeed, but evidently abandoned in a haste and confusion far beyond that permitted even at Beauton Park. She was still more amazed, when she went through the rest of the servants' apartments, and could nowhere see anybody. Bashfulness, however, was not her foible ; and accordingly she hastened to the drawing-room door, and gave two smart taps at it. No answer was returned. She opened the door : the room was deserted. She turned to the dining-room, and hesitated not to apply eye and ear alternately to the key-hole. It was in vain ; neither sight nor sound repaid her.

Her courage, great as it was, did not amount to running the risk of an abrupt intrusion upon Mr. Evelyn ; so she hurried up stairs, and running through the few rooms that were now

inhabited, and finding them all deserted, she shrieked aloud with terror. Echo only replied to her ; and hurrying down stairs again, and hastily peeping into Herbert's room as she passed, she muttered " Mr. Herbert and all !" and escaped from the house into the lawn.

As she crossed the front hall, Major Vandeleur's portmanteau and travelling trunk caught her eye : " Oh ! this is all enchantment together !" she exclaimed, rubbing her eyes. " Let me think : did I taste anything at the milliners' that they could have put any drug into ?—not a drop. What is come to me ?"

She looked around her again, and now in the distance she saw a crowd advancing slowly through the trees ;—for, evening as it was, the news had spread through the air, no one knew how, and several persons had fallen in amongst the domestics of the family.

Mrs. Whitecross hurried towards them. The first person whom she distinctly saw, supporting the head of his beloved master, was her own

husband, who had returned with Vandeleur. It was no time for welcome—she looked a little farther—and saw the dead body of Herbert! Sally Whitecross, though conceited and presuming, was good-natured and affectionate. She was obliged to catch by some one's arm to keep her from falling,—or, as she termed it herself, from “dropping,” at this appalling spectacle; and it was some minutes before the poor woman's hysterical choking permitted her to burst into loud wailing and to ask what had happened.

No one could tell. And as their feelings were as yet too sincerely engaged to allow their imaginations to fabricate a story, they indulged in the mysterious, and only gloomily shook their heads.

“Oh, my heavens! my poor young lady! what will become of her when she hears it! Does no one know where she is?”

“No one, indeed,” some one whispered: “they say she's gone entirely.”

“Gone entirely! What do you mean? gone where?”

Again, though no one knew how the whisper had been spread, or with whom it originated, for no one could recall what words fell from Mr. Evelyn in his distraction, but so it was, that every one had a vague idea that Gertrude was gone off with a foreign-looking stranger; and this was now conveyed to Mrs. Whitecross. She uttered a loud scream, which reached even Mr. Evelyn's ears; although he, unwilling to have his anguish exposed to the gaze of the strangers who had assembled, hung considerably behind. Fearing that some alarming change had taken place in Vandeleur's state, he hurried forward to inquire what had happened. Mrs. Whitecross forgot all her fears of him in her consternation, and running up to him, cried out, "Oh! sir, for God's sake tell me, is it true that Miss Evelyn is carried off by a Frenchman?"

"It is but too true that she is gone."

"Then may God pity the poor child! Oh, sir! oh, husband! oh, William Whitecross!

there is no time for further concealment ! the truth must be told !—the *Count de l'Espoir* has mistaken *Miss Evelyn* for me !”

On hearing this speech, not a doubt even entered any one's mind but that Sally's brain had turned. Her husband, under this impression, tenderly consigned his master to the care of whoever stood next him, and turned to console his wife. “Compose yourself, compose yourself, Sally,” said he; “don't talk so wildly, dear. But do you know anything of this Frenchman?”

“Know anything of him ! Oh, William !” she sobbed out, falling on his shoulder, “it is true what I have said. It was *me* he wanted—it is”——and she hesitated, with a natural feeling of reluctance, to name to her husband her former wooer as being again an acquaintance.

But, while she hesitated, Miss Wilson—for even her inertia was overcome by the general attraction—joined the sad procession, and hearing Mrs. Whitecross's last words, was roused enough by the tumult around her to say, “No

such thing, no such thing, woman ; the gentleman has been meeting and courting Miss Evelyn. And having calmly made this announcement, she was timidly advancing on tip-toe to see what had befallen Herbert in the short period since she left him, when Mr Evelyn, seizing her by the arm, exclaimed, “ What is that you say about this man meeting Miss Evelyn ? When—where, that you could know of ? and how have they destroyed my child ? ” But the very words softening his feelings, he again remembered that there were too many witnesses of his emotion, and determined to stifle further anxiety to learn the particulars, until they should reach the house, and until Vandeleur, nearly as deeply interested, could attend to them.

As the first step taken by Mr. Evelyn when he had returned from the harbour, after Major Vandeleur’s wound, was to send off his fleetest hunter for a surgeon, who resided in the town of Beauton, the procession did not arrive many

minutes before he did. Of course, his first glance at poor Herbert was decisive; but of Major Vandeleur's state he was very doubtful. The ball, though it had passed quite through the lower part of his side, had touched the hip-joint, and, the surgeon feared, had fractured the bone.

Quiet was of course prescribed above all things. But as that, under existing circumstances, could only be the result of utter insensibility, no sooner did Vandeleur, under the surgeon's hands and the influence of restoratives, recover his faculties and speech, than he insisted upon making every possible inquiry respecting the dreadful, and indeed most mysterious, events of that fatal evening.

Mr. Evelyn and the surgeon would both have dissuaded him, the former assuring him that he had sent to have Gertrude sought for; but there was a cool decision in Vandeleur's manner, that showed them opposition would be fruitless. Accordingly, the surgeon, saying he would return

to Beauton to make some necessary arrangements previously to taking up his abode at the Park, withdrew ; and Mr. Evelyn informed Vandeleur exactly of what had fallen from the two women, and of which he had not yet had time to inquire farther.

Nothing could of course be more distracting than such intelligence proved, as far as it went ; for though Vandeleur, notwithstanding all that appeared against it, would sooner have doubted his own faith and truth than that of Gertrude, he knew not how to account for Miss Wilson's assertion—she who was simple truth itself, from the mere incapacity for invention. Mrs. Whitecross's letter also now flashed across his mind ; and though he did not for a moment believe—scarcely listen to the speech of that lady, as to herself being the object of the Frenchman's pursuit, he still admitted not a doubt even to enter his mind but that his young and artless Gertrude had been led into some fatal snare, and was far more sinned against than sinning. It

scarcely required a moment's consideration for him to arrive at this conclusion; and even De l'Espoir could, in his utmost malice, have wished his rival no deeper agony than that which assailed him while Mr. Evelyn went to summon Sally Whitecross to his presence.

She entered his chamber, her eyes swollen with weeping; and instantly advancing to the bed on which Vandeleur lay, she burst out again into such floods of tears, that she was unable to speak for some minutes, and hid her face in the counterpane. As soon as she was a little recovered, she clasped her hands together, and with eyes still streaming, and an air of sincerity and contrition which could not be mistaken, she exclaimed, "Oh! Major Vandeleur!—oh! my dear master! I am a wretch—I am a wretch!—you never can forgive me! I have destroyed you and my dearest young lady!" She sobbed violently again.

Mr. Evelyn desired her to command herself, and consider the state of Major Vandeleur's

health and feelings. Vandeleur was himself unable to speak, from agitation and alarm of he knew not exactly what kind.

“ Oh ! I will, I will, sir ! But to think of it, the base deceiving villain !—and I that ought to know so much of human nature ! Certainly, after all, William Whitecross, you know more, and are the best man and husband living.”

She then, without much farther apostrophising the absent, or tantalizing the anxiety of those present, proceeded to give a circumstantial account, from beginning to end, of Gertrude's and her own adventures with the Count De l'Espoir, and of the infatuation which prevented her from putting Gertrude on her guard against him by disclosing the truth.

At a glance Vandeleur beheld, displayed before him, the whole of the diabolical scheme that had been laid for his unhappy bride, and which, alas ! had been but too successful. That he could not wholly acquit her of being too easily

duped by a stranger, was only the necessary consequence of his never having even heard of the arguments which that stranger had quoted in support of his theory ; but his fond affection, and consideration of her youth, inexperience, and exalted motives, not only prevented him from throwing a shadow of blame over her, but caused him more deeply to execrate the villain that could take advantage of such a creature, whose intelligence was only inferior to her confiding purity and innocence.

Mr. Evelyn, however, was not so easily convinced. He remembered Lady Luscombe's hints, and Gertrude's own confusion at the thoughts of Vandeleur's return ; and even should they all prove to have been subservient to the same end, not such he conceived the assertions of Miss Wilson.

“ Call her in,” was Vandeleur's only reply, with a cold smile which told sufficiently how lightly he held farther doubts.

“ Miss Wilson,” said Mr. Evelyn as she entered, “ did you not say that this stranger

has been meeting with, and courting my wretched daughter for some time?"

"Not for some time, sir; only they did meet before."

"When? and where?"

"In the far grove, sir, yesterday evening. I went with Miss Evelyn."

"What makes you think he was courting her?"

"I saw his eyes, sir."

"But did you hear any of their conversation?"

"I did, sir."

"Well, d—n it! go on! What was it about? Did they talk of going off, or of love at all?"

"No, sir."

Mr. Evelyn made an impatient movement, as if he would strike her. She hastily added—

"But I judge the gentleman was coaxing Miss Evelyn to meet him again, and telling her he had some queer animal to show her, whose name I forget."

“ You see——,” said Vandeleur with a faint smile, to Mr. Evelyn.

“ What do I see ? I don’t understand her.”

“ You sec, it is still the same story : she has heard them speaking of *animal magnetism*.”

“ Yes, sir, that was just the name. Miss Evelyn seemed afraid of it, and yet to wish to see it : and, indeed, I thought it all only a cat’s-paw to have another meeting. But, sir, what has happened to Mr. Herbert ?”

“ Go, go—that will do,” said Mr. Evelyn, instinctively feeling, what poor Gertrude felt before, how utterly impossible it would be to convey any idea of the truth to her obtuse and unimaginative mind : indeed, he could scarcely be said to understand it himself ; and although never, even at the frenzied moment of raising his hand to her, did he really suspect his innocent child of the crime of which she accused herself, yet the habitual injustice of preferring one of his children to the other, without the slightest reason, now came out in double force

when they were thus thrown into so dreadful a collision ; and in his heart, at that moment, he hoped he might never see his daughter more.

Here let us drop the veil. There are some states of feeling in which the sufferer dares not give the rein to his own imagination—nay, dare not boldly open his eyes on the whole reality, instinctively feeling that madness or death must ensue. Such was Vandeleur's present state. To lie powerless on a bed of sickness while his bride was borne away in the fangs of a monster whom he well knew how deeply she must by this time loathe, and to be obliged to leave to hirelings, whom he despatched in every direction for that purpose, the chance of rescuing her, might seem perhaps as great a trial as man could be subjected to : but, in addition, Vandeleur sometimes felt that deep and foul suspicion might, in the vulgar mind, attach itself to her sacred name.

In this, however, he gave himself unnecessary pain. Mrs. Sally Whitecross's penitential explanation, elicited by the steady good sense of

her husband, and her own good feeling, and made public under the same influences, turned the tide at once, completely, and for ever, in Gertrude's favour: albeit it was received by the multitude as they acknowledge the influence of the moon upon the tide of the waters;—they believed it as firmly, and understood it as little. The only difference was, that while they are, perhaps, vaguely disposed ultimately to refer the moon's influence to God, they certainly not more vaguely referred the Frenchman's to the devil.

These consolatory particulars, however, reached not Vandeleur in his sick-chamber, where he lay for many months a prisoner, and, during which time, not a trace had ever been found of the fugitives: and though Mr. Evelyn's first orders on this subject might have been lukewarm, it is almost unnecessary to say, that from the moment Vandeleur recovered his recollection, all that love, benevolence, and indignation united could suggest, was put in force

for Gertrude's recovery from the state of surpassing misery in which he knew she must be, if yet living. But all was alike in vain.

Lord and Lady Luscombe came to visit the afflicted family ; and she, dispensing with form on so trying an occasion, herself accompanied Mr. Evelyn to Vandeleur's chamber, to assure him of everything that he already knew, of Gertrude's purity and unswerving truth ; and that no one who saw them together, could for a moment have doubted of the nature of the count's claims to her attention. Indeed, her own last letter to Vandeleur from Paris, which only reached him a fortnight after her disappearance, recapitulating some of the strongest arguments in favour of animal magnetism, and, as was now evident, wishing to elicit his opinion and sentiments concerning it, removed the only feeling that had ever crossed his mind as even unaccountable in her conduct, viz. that of such profound secrecy of her feelings, and hopes, from him.

But the only circumstance which, during the course of his long and most ill-timed confinement, could have brought anything like real comfort to his mind, was the following letter from Mr. C., Herbert's physician, which Mr. Evelyn received about three weeks after the boy's death.

“ MY DEAR SIR, .

“ Although in your affliction you have not thought of communicating to me the catastrophe which has befallen my interesting patient, your son ; still, as the sad affair has reached my ears through other channels, with some circumstances which must have rendered your bereavement particularly trying to your feelings, I cannot deny myself the satisfaction of writing to you on this subject, because I think I can afford you some comfort. I am informed that circumstances have led you to attribute your son's death to the interference and quackery of a stranger. Now, however much I condemn all

such unqualified tampering with health, I must on this occasion assure you that I do not think any human power could much have accelerated that melancholy event; and although whatever means were used, may have possibly caused it at that particular moment, it was only as it might have been caused by taking him up or down stairs—into the open air—or any other necessary exertion. This does not, of course, in the least acquit the person in intention; and I merely pledge myself to the fact, as I think it must bring some comfort to your mind, to show you by what a frail tenure his life was held from hour to hour, and how soon it must have been relinquished even with the tenderest care. You are aware I mentioned this in substance to you when I was last at your house. From the moment I perceived his recollection or intelligence occasionally returning, and his bodily strength proportionally sinking, I saw that we had nothing left on which to work. Of your other, and perhaps severer trial, I will not

peak, seeing that on that point I can afford no relief, yet, feeling as I do that there has been some unexplained mystery attending the whole matter. With sincere condolence,

“ I remain,

“ My dear sir, &c.”

Will it be believed that this letter, so calculated to afford Vandeleur such peculiar comfort, not only with respect to his own feelings, but as being a balm for those of Gertrude when it could be communicated to her, which she would probably feel as almost indemnifying her for all she should have suffered ;—will it be believed that Mr. Evelyn withheld this letter from his knowledge ? It is almost impossible exactly to define his motives. He not only really and sincerely liked Vandeleur, and enjoyed his society, but was as much more enraged and disgusted with his unfortunate daughter even than he would otherwise have been, for having caused his present illness,—as if she would not have

saved every throb of his wounds by doubly painful ones in her own heart: yet, with the cruel injustice to which he had habitually yielded, he withheld from him what he knew would have afforded him relief, because he did not choose to be deprived of the right of blaming Gertrude for everything. Not that he acknowledged this motive to himself—far from it: on the contrary, he first threw the letter pettishly from him, saying he did not believe a word of it; that Mr. C. had always made a sort of pet of Gertrude, and, under pretence of clearing the stranger, meant it really to exculpate her: although in fact, in the mutilated edition of the story which had reached London, Mr. C. had never even heard Gertrude's name mentioned in connexion with her brother's death; and, in the latter paragraph of his letter, merely alluded to her elopement, as he was aware of her engagement with Vandeleur.

Mr. Evelyn next said to himself, he should show the letter to Vandeleur by-and-by. But,

in the mean time, a pretty little toy of Gertrude's stood on the table near him,—a sort of ornamented letter-box, which Vandeleur had sent to her from London for slipping his letters into, without the trouble of unlocking it each time she received one, as that was to be an event of such frequent occurrence. Mr. Evelyn now, either by design, or in a fit of absence, let the letter slip into this box. It of course was irrecoverable, as Gertrude had the key of it always hung about her neck. Poor thing! how often must she have sighed over it since! and how little did she guess the treasure it now secured,—one which she would have valued far beyond even the dear ones already there!

For an instant Mr. Evelyn almost blamed himself when he found he could not open the box without violence, which he did not feel himself authorised to use; but then he satisfied himself by saying that Vandeleur already acquitted Gertrude more than *he* thought she deserved, and that justice to all parties was best

preserved by leaving matters as they now stood. He forgot that it was the fear of the balance preponderating against himself, that made him so anxious for this left-handed justice, which is but too common to uneducated minds.

Another excuse too, and perhaps a more efficient one, may be offered for Mr. Evelyn's conduct on this occasion. His health, both of mind and body, had decidedly got what is expressively termed *a shake*. From the time of Herbert's first accident, he had almost entirely, and quite suddenly, abandoned his field-sports, and consequently almost all his exercise or occupation. His spirits flagged, and he had recourse to wine. He was naturally healthy and robust; this course of life was therefore precisely that most destructive to him. The effects first showed themselves in his temper: he became irritable, nervous, feverish; odd, unpleasant sensations in his head and stomach succeeded, and his spirits sank still lower. He drank more wine; the symptoms increased: but as his health was apparently still unimpaired

ed, and as he was one who, from seldom requiring one, laughed at doctors, he refused to attend to those symptoms.

Then came the final blow,—the loss of both his children however differently estimated—and the tedious illness of Major Vandeleur. He sank entirely beneath it—or rather beneath its influence on an uneducated mind which had no resources to turn to; and beneath deleterious habits which were suffered to become inveterate from the same cause—want of education,—that is, of mental discipline.

He now did little more than wander about the court in front of the house, dashing the pebbles about with the end of his stick; or sit in the drawing-room, to which Vandeleur was now able to be moved, murmuring lamentations and bitter execrations, which alike had lost their poignancy, if not their meaning, from constant reiteration.

At last, one day, Miss Wilson, who still vegetated in her old quarters unmolested, came

running into the drawing-room. She looked pale and frightened; for, strange to say, the poor creature had grown nervous under the fearful convulsions that had upset the family.

“What is the matter, for Heaven’s sake, Miss Wilson?” exclaimed Vandeleur, starting up from the sofa where he was reclining. “Any news?”

“Oh no, sir, none that you mean. But Mr. Evelyn, sir, looks very queer.”

“What on earth do you mean?” (for her looks could not be trifled with.) “Where is he?”

“Sir, he is sitting on the parlour-window stool, leaning up in the corner, and his eyes and mouth all wrong.”

Vandeleur hurried out as fast as he was able; and there indeed he found his unhappy friend in an alarming state. He had been suddenly seized with a fit, and although medical attendance was instantly procured, he never spoke again. He seemed to retain life for two days; but at the end of that time he was no more,

and was laid beside his son in the vault of the family.

When Mr. Evelyn's sudden death took place, Vandeleur found himself in a very disagreeable and troublesome situation. Mr. Evelyn had few relations, and of those few none were residing in the same part of the country with himself. His nearest and almost only acknowledged relative was a nephew, the only son of his only brother; a youth for whom, on the death of his spendthrift father, Mr. Evelyn had purchased a commission, and who had gone with his regiment to India. Vandeleur was perfectly aware of the general state of Mr. Evelyn's pecuniary affairs; for, besides that the latter had not the strange and unamiable foible of keeping them concealed as closely as if he feared a robber in every friend, the late circumstance of his intended connexion with the family had put him fully in possession of every particular. He knew that Gertrude was now sole heiress to her father; and, from Mr. Evelyn's

habits, he thought it very probable he had made no will. At all events, under every consideration, he felt that he himself was the person most fitted to act as executor. Yet, wishing to have some one present while he examined the papers and desks of his late friend, he wrote to beg of Lord Foxhill, who, he knew, was one of Mr. Evelyn's most intimate companions, to do that good office for him. He came immediately; and in their search they found, contrary to their expectations, a will, made soon after Herbert's accident, when probably Mr. Evelyn had thought seriously for the first time in his life.

The will contained little more than a few trifling legacies; but it was particularly satisfactory to Vandeleur's feelings, both with respect to the past and future, as it appointed him and Lord Foxhill joint trustees and executors: and as they both felt conscious that the latter was merely named as being always on the spot, while Vandeleur was likely to be wandering about, their first step together was to put matters into

such a train, as, while it should admit of a long and indefinite absence on the part of Vandeleur, without Gertrude's interest suffering thereby, should at the same time spare all unnecessary trouble to his old colleague.

From the first moment that Vandeleur had seen reason to hope for his own final recovery, he had formed a resolution, that as soon as he should be able to endure travelling, he would set out, and in person institute such a search after Gertrude, as, if her destroyer should be able to elude, would indeed prove him the demon that some already believed him to be. From this determination there was nothing now to deter him. His mother had long been weaned from depending on his society for her happiness, and still resided almost entirely with the Duchess of Castleton. He therefore resolved at once upon disposing of his commission; for, besides that his health was still far from being perfectly restored, he knew that the duties of his profession would immeasurably interfere with the unlimited search he meditated.

Of the disadvantage to himself attending his abandoning a profession in which he had so far succeeded, even beyond his own most sanguine hopes, he thought not for a moment. The image ever before his eyes, was that of his innocent, beautiful, loving, and beloved Gertrude, delivered up entirely into the power of a monster, who had not hesitated to employ such means for her destruction. He knew her ardent character too well not to feel in his own soul, and through every nerve, how deep and dreadful must be her abhorrence of him in whose power she was; and he sometimes was driven to hope, and to believe, that death must have ere now delivered her from such surpassing misery. With such thoughts ever present to his mind, what were his own worldly advantages or prospects to him!—less than nothing. He felt that his interest in them was gone for ever, with her who was to have shared them, and that to resign them now in her service was the last ray of comfort he could ever derive from them.

He hurried to London; and so determined was he upon his search being made with a minuteness that must baffle all ingenuity of concealment, that while the arrangements for the disposal of his commission were going on, he had every means put in requisition to seek for the fugitives even there. But it was in vain; and in vain was it likewise that he caused the offices whence passports are issued, to be examined: there was no record of any such names as De l'Espoir or De Brons to be met with.

His next visit was to Paris; but there he was equally unsuccessful. The Count de l'Espoir had indeed left Paris at the time that corresponded with his appearance in England—this he knew too well—but of his return no one had ever heard.

Being fully aware that Gertrude's fortune must have been far more the object of the villainous pursuit, than the reluctant hand of a creature so unsuited to him in every way, Vandeleur drew up an article, which he caused to be

inserted in the public prints of every part of Europe, mentioning the event of Mr. Evelyn's death, and the circumstance of his daughter being now sole heiress to his splendid fortune, hoping thereby to elicit some intelligence respecting her. But although he gave references and addresses to every capital town, and even to many others, of the Continent, and spared neither time, fatigue, nor expense, by which he could have a chance of lighting on a trace of those he was seeking, total mystery and silence still enveloped them, until at last he began to think that both must have perished together.

He shuddered at the thought of how? or where? or when? or why? The probable answer to each was alike dreadful. And yet, if she still lived, was her fate much better?

CHAPTER XVI.

This cold and creeping kinsman, who so long
Kept his eye on me as the snake upon
The fluttering bird, hath ere this time o'erstept me—
Become the master of my rights, and lord
Of that which lifts him up to princes in
Dominion and domain. WERNER.

It was after a continued and unwearied search of several months, during which time he had visited more cities, wandered through more inhabited solitudes, and plunged into more places of public and private amusement, and general resort, than probably the merest votary of pleasure, or searcher after variety, had ever done in the same space of time, that one evening, heartless and dispirited, he flung himself upon a sofa in his hotel at Brussels, whither the circle

of his wanderings had brought him on his return homewards.

“A letter from England, sir,” said his servant Whitecross, who still accompanied him. .

“Why did I not get it earlier?” he exclaimed languidly,—“when the English post came in?”

“It came in the ambassador’s bag, sir; which was the cause of the delay.”

Vandeleur took the letter. He did not immediately recognise the handwriting; but, on opening, he found it was a scrawl from old Lord Foxhill. But, heavens! what were the news that scrawl contained!

Since Vandeleur’s absence from England, Lord Luscombe had been appointed Secretary for Foreign Affairs; and Lord Foxhill’s letter was to inform Vandeleur, that he had just received a letter from his daughter, Lady Luscombe, informing him that Mr. George Evelyn, the next heir to the property of Beanton, and who was just returned from India, had applied

for a warrant to be issued from the secretary's office for the apprehension of Gertrude and her accomplice, accused of the murder of Herbert Evelyn. Lady Luscombe, with all the activity of friendship, on hearing of this, wrote off to her father, who, she was aware, always knew where to direct to Vandeleur, and entreated of him not to lose a post in despatching a letter to him with the frightful intelligence.

It is absolutely impossible to convey any idea of Vandeleur's feelings on reading this letter. That vague and unpleasant surmises might be formed concerning Gertrude's disappearance, by those who only knew the worst of human nature, and who had never known her, to correct their vile imaginings by, he was well aware: but that there lived a human being whose interest or inclination it could be to fix the stain upon her spotless purity, and then hold it up to public view for the finger of scorn to point at, had never even entered into his imagination.

When, upon the death of Mr. Evelyn, he ran over in his mind the few relatives of whom he had ever heard him speak, he thought of Mr. George Evelyn amongst the rest, solely from an accidental mention of him upon one occasion ; when, the conversation turning on the purchase of commissions, Mr. Evelyn mentioned his having bought an ensigncy for this young man. The circumstance of his being in the entail never entered into the contemplation of any one, probably not even of himself, for Herbert and Gertrude seemed even peculiarly formed for health and happiness, until the death of the one, and the mysterious disappearance of the other, seemed literally to throw the ball at his foot. His mother immediately wrote the news to him, and advised him to return. He did so ; and from all the particulars he could collect, without exciting suspicion of his intentions, he succeeded in persuading himself that Gertrude herself was no more, and that De l'Espoir, having no legal proof of their marriage to produce, had determined

never to make any claim even on her personal fortune. However, as Mr. Evelyn was aware that, while this was mere conjecture, the trustees could not be expected to resign their trust in his favour, he resolved upon bringing the matter to a crisis at once, by instituting the prosecution against his unfortunate kinswoman and her accomplice ; soothing whatever compunctious visitings might occasionally assail him, with the reflection, that if Gertrude were innocent, her innocence would appear—and if guilty—why she deserved her fate.

Vandeleur ran over Lord Foxhill's letter again and again, in hopes each time of extracting some comfort from it; but it was all in vain. Lord Luscombe was obliged to issue the warrant; and, turn the matter in what light he could, he saw nothing but additional misery and disgrace impending over the lovely young creature whom he had taken to his bosom, with feelings which partook of those of the tender parent, as well as of the impassioned lover.

Acquittal ! what a word to be coupled with her name ! and acquitted of what ? Why, the very accusation would prove her death.

Yet, that he must be the one to seek and make her aware of that accusation, was the first feeling that he knew to be reality, where for some time all had appeared a frightful dream. Yes, he must seek her out if she still existed, and find what was the most prudent course now left her to pursue, even if his own heart's blood must distil drop by drop in the undertaking. But where to turn to next ?

There was but one capital town of any consideration which he had yet left unexplored,—and that perhaps as much from the improbability of their having gone thither, as from feelings of another kind, which made him prefer writing and sending agents thither, to presenting himself on such a quest to the English ambassador who at that moment resided at St. Petersburg. When this frightful letter reached him, however, and when he considered the minuteness of his former

search, and the hopelessness of going over the same ground again ; and when he recollected that the very circumstance of his supposing St. Petersburg out of the question, might cause it to be selected by De l'Espoir, as it was evident he chose for some reason to lie *perdu*, he determined that no selfish feelings of mortification, or of any other kind whatsoever, should, even for an hour longer, operate to detain him from this last and remote chance of finding her, and doing all in his power to smooth a path which it pleased Heaven to make so rugged for her.

Accordingly, within an hour after he received Lord Foxhill's letter, he was *en route* once more ; and scarcely allowing himself time for rest or food, he arrived in the capital of Russia in the shortest possible time.

It is the custom in that city for persons of all ranks and conditions, even strangers who are only residing there for a short time, to put their names on some conspicuous part of the outside of their houses or lodgings. Although Vande-

leur had not a hope that De l'Espoir would comply with this custom, except by giving a false name, still, in the feverish state of his anxiety. the first evening of his arrival found him traversing the streets, and examining the houses as he passed, with an intensity of curiosity which called forth many a gratified smile from the inhabitants. They little guessed how insensible his eye remained to every part of their gorgeous architecture, except the one little compartment on which it rested.

As he was thus hurrying along, and endeavouring to form in his mind some plan for his proceedings the next day, which might afford him any chance of ascertaining whether, or not, the persons he sought had been heard of there, he observed an immense concourse of persons flocking to one particular building, and entering it promiscuously. He inquired of his guide the meaning of it, and was informed that the building was a theatre, and that on that evening was to be performed a new tragedy,

which the Emperor had commanded, and at which he, and the rest of the imperial family, were expected to appear.

Vandeleur had made it a rule to peep into every place of public resort wherever he wandered ; deeming it very probable that, whatever might be the state of the miserable Gertrude, her villanous destroyer would not entirely seclude himself from pleasure and amusement, however he might deem it necessary to conceal his name and character. In pursuance of this plan, Vandeleur now resolved upon joining the crowd, taking his place in the theatre, and remaining there as long as he observed people continue to flock in. He had not the most distant hope of meeting Gertrude in any place of the kind ; fearing, but too acutely, that such would be far from congenial to the state her feelings must be in. “ But, O that I could meet him ! ” he exclaimed ; and his dark eyes assumed an expression of fierceness very foreign to their natural animated, but joyous and benevolent one ; and

his cheek became flushed with a colour that had for many months been a stranger to it. Vandeleur had but partially recovered from his severe wound when he set out a pilgrim in Gertrude's cause, and the excited and feverish state of his mind and feelings since that period, had considerably altered his appearance. He had lost the look of vigorous health and activity that formerly distinguished him; he was languid, pale, and emaciated; and the bright and playful smile, which was formerly the chief point of attraction in his countenance, had now totally disappeared, and was replaced by a severe compression of the mouth, that gave to even casual observers the idea of a mind stretched on some painful subject beyond calm or patient endurance.

His fine temper still remained unimpaired: it seemed as if his griefs were too much apart from every one, and every thing else, to exercise the slightest influence towards them; and his faithful Whitecross not unfrequently swept a tear from his own eye, when, as he waited on his

master, he observed by his gloomy silence, and sometimes an involuntary gesture of despair, how deep his sufferings were, while he continued gentle and kind to those about him.

On entering the theatre, the spectacle that met Vandeleur's eye was noble and imposing. The imperial family of Russia were remarkable for the beauty of their appearance, and the fine and commanding air which is so essential to royalty ; unless, indeed, where the want of it is supplied by a mind so commanding, so exalted in itself, that it seizes those of others captive, and draws them after it above all minor considerations. But this is not often to be seen ; perhaps it is not desirable that it should be.

If the Russian ladies in general want the exquisite polish and refinement in which those of England perhaps surpass all others, they still possess a degree of beauty, both of feature and form, which renders them far from uninteresting : and as this occasion was considered quite a fête, Vandeleur happened to see them to the best

possible advantage. But what was loveliness or brilliancy to him? He sought the blighted and the broken-hearted; and his eye ran as coldly, though as inquiringly, over the beauty of the faces that surrounded him, as it had already done over their abodes.

It was also as much in vain. He saw men and women of all ages, and of all grades, and apparently of all countries, that one usually meets with; but nowhere did he see the features which he sought.

He waited until the play was nearly half over, and was then about to leave the theatre in despair, when, on changing his position for that purpose, his attention was arrested by a tall dark figure in a distant box. He held his breath, and strained his eyes, in order to obtain a clearer view; but, as if the person was aware of his intention, he perceived him stoop, as in the act of addressing some one who sat behind him, and continue in that leaning position. Vandeleur kept his eyes fixed, with a determi-

nation at least to weary him, if indeed he purposely chose that attitude for concealment. In the mean time the tragedy deepened; a death scene ensued, and the house was breathless in emotion. The actor was a powerful one, and addressed himself to the feelings of all. Subject, performance, and incident would, however, all alike have been lost on Vandeleur, but that just at the moment of the death, which happened to be that of a young man, an only son and brother, he observed a sudden bustle and confusion in the box on which he had previously fixed his eyes. Every one who occupied it had stood up, and Vandeleur could now distinctly see that they were carrying out a lady who had fainted.

To one whose whole soul is concentrated on one particular object, almost everything in nature will appear to bear some reference to it; just as the eye, after gazing long and fixedly at anything, will for some moments see its image reflected upon everything else it looks

at. A circumstance which at another moment would not have cost Vandeleur a thought, now struck upon his heart almost with the force of conviction. The circumstance was merely that the lady, whoever she might be, had sat at the back of the box, though only gentlemen occupied the front, and had contrived to conceal herself so completely as to elude even his intended scrutiny. It was sufficient to cause him to rush from his own place, and, by contriving to meet the party in the lobby, to ascertain if his palpitating presentiment was correct.

It was.

In the wan, wasted, and now death-like form and countenance he encountered, encircled in the arms of strange and foreign-looking men, he recognised, at a glance, his own loved and long-lost Gertrude. The lobby was rather obscurely lighted; but the fiery gleam that darted from Vandeleur's eyes, as he sought De l'Espoir amongst those who surrounded her, seemed as if, of itself, it would have illu-

minated it, at least sufficiently to discover the object of his fury. He was not, however, amongst them.

Could Vandeleur, then, have been mistaken in the figure which had first attracted his attention to that box? And if so, should it be a subject of rejoicing or lamentation to him?

He had not long time to consider; for the moment that the fresh current of air from the entrance rushed in upon Gertrude, she yielded to its influence, and revived. She opened her eyes, and looked in astonishment around her. They caught in an instant the form of Vandeleur hurrying in agitation towards her. Her first involuntary impulse, while her senses had as yet perhaps but imperfectly returned, was to utter a rapturous exclamation, and stretch her arms towards him: but, as if the act itself, or his rush forward to receive her, had the effect of fully reawakening her, she suddenly started back into the arms of the gentlemen who supported

her, and uttering a fearful and prolonged scream of despair, buried her face in her shawl, and made a movement with her hand to hurry forwards. Vandeleur stopped, as if he had received a death-blow, on the instant.

There are some feelings which, when deliberately read or written, seem to be the result of reasoning, and therefore to require time in their experience; while in reality they are but nature's instinct, and flash through the brain or heart in less time than we can calculate.

When Gertrude first stretched out her arms to Vandeleur, with the look and tone of joyful recognition, he felt as if there was still hope—still some explanation, however improbable, by which she might yet be his. But when he saw her start back—when he saw the rush of sudden agony over her countenance—and when he heard that shriek of despair, he knew, but too surely, that all was lost! Under this conviction, he hesitated for a moment whether or not to address her, so paralysed, so over-

powered did he feel. It was, however, but for a moment he could hesitate. He stifled his own agonising feelings, and remembering the importance of the communication he had to make, he determined to forget himself, except in as far as he could be of use in softening the cruel hardships of her almost unprecedented fate. In this spirit he advanced and took her hand, for the gentlemen stood irresolute during so strange a scene. Her face was still buried in the folds of her dress; but it was evident she knew who touched her, for she trembled violently, and, without looking up, she made an effort to release her hand.

Vandeleur endeavoured to compose himself sufficiently to speak; but ere he could command words, De l'Espoir himself appeared. He had only run forwards to order a conveyance, and now returned to carry Gertrude into it. He instantly recognised Vandeleur, and, without betraying the slightest astonishment or confusion, took off his hat, not only with that

coolness which a man may well assume who has succeeded over another to his utmost satisfaction, but with the perfect politeness and expressive civility of a Frenchman. Vandeleur instinctively returned the salutation, but, it must be confessed, with a very different grace ; for it was evident to all, that the honest brow of the Englishman grew darker, as if to indemnify himself for the forced concession ; and turning abruptly again to Gertrude, he said in a tone of deep decision, “ I must speak with you instantly.”

Gertrude, who, though her face was still covered, had caught the sound of De l'Espoir's foot returning, now looked up, and cast towards him a look of terror, and evidently habitual inquiry of his will.

He did not answer to her speaking glance ; but calling one of the gentlemen aside, gave him such an explanation of the scene as he thought sufficient, at once to account for it, and to cause them to disperse. They did so accordingly,

with many bows and expressions of regret; and De l'Espoir, taking the support of Gertrude now on himself, turned once more to Vandeleur, and, in a tone and with a dignity which might have suited well with a better cause, said, "Major Vandeleur, I can be at no loss to imagine how bitter your feelings must be towards me; and, as far as it is in my power, I should be most happy to soothe them.—Nay, hear me out.—For some part of the cause of those feelings (and he glanced at Gertrude) I cannot, nor can you expect that I should, apologise: for others, they only require patient investigation to clear me; and for your own wound, I assure you, upon my honour, it was accidental.—Nay, permit me.—I am aware of Mr. Evelyn's death, and that you are his executor. I will hope that, as a man of sense, you have come hither to seek us only in that character, and as such,—nay, (let me add, in both our names,) as an old friend of both, the Countess de l'Espoir and myself will be most happy to receive you." He again

took off his hat as if to acknowledge Vandeleur in this new character of old friend.

During the earlier parts of this speech, Vandeleur had frequently made indignant attempts to interrupt and contradict him; but still kept in bounds by his cool politeness, and his own wish to learn all that it so much imported him to know, he determined to hear him to an end, and then judge how he was to act. But when that end did come, every other feeling—ay, even of indignation and disgust—was absorbed in the one fearful idea of Gertrude's actually being the Countess de l'Espoir. He changed colour violently, and hastily turning his eyes towards her, glared upon her with a look that would have terrified her, had hers not been immovably fixed upon the ground. But who could look on that faded, shrinking form, and feel aught but the deepest and most heart-felt compassion! His countenance relaxed in a moment from its wild expression, very nearly resembling reproach, and stepping quiet-

ly toward her, he took her hand, even as she leaned on De l'Espoir's arm, and in a deep hollow voice, which spoke at once the sorrow and the pity of his soul, he asked—"Gertrude, are you married?"

She raised her eyes to his with one lightning glance. It was enough:—the most vivid flash that ever broke from out the heavens on the darkest night, never served more clearly to show to the shipwrecked mariner the ruin and the desolation, the wide and hopeless gulf that yawned around him on every side, far as the eye could reach, than did that glance tell to Vandeleur that all his earthly hopes were at an end. All she had felt for him, all she had suffered since, and all that she was aware he would feel at the intelligence, were mingled in that glance—and it did not signify that the words "I am" died inaudibly upon her lips.

What is the nature of hope? Is it sometimes so palpable as to constitute the chief support of our existence?—sometimes so subtile as

to elude our own consciousness? Few will, perhaps, be disposed to deny the first: and if the second be less sure, whence is that patient acquiescence under the privation of that we most desire, until we even persuade ourselves we have ceased to wish for it;—yet, if a moment arrive when some physical or moral impossibility intervenes between us and the object of our desire, which it is no longer in fate to overcome, we at once experience a contraction, a convulsion, a tension, as it were, of the brain, and stagnation of the heart, as violent and as painful as if we had never until then contemplated the possibility of our disappointment?

Such were the sensations experienced by Godfrey Vandeleur for one dreadful moment when Gertrude Evelyn confessed herself a wife. Had he been asked, or had he asked himself, in what other situation than that of De l'Espoir's wife, he could have hoped, or even wished, to find her, he must have acknowledged that his present feelings were not founded in reason. Yet so it was,

that when he saw his young, and beautiful, and loving bride, actually the wife of another man, and so, out of his reach for ever, he felt stunned, as if the gentle and momentary look that had acknowledged this, had indeed been one of lightning, which had blasted him in its glance.

He continued to gaze upon her for a moment longer, as if to take a farewell view of her as his own, and to recognise her as the property of another—and that other the Count de l'Espoir ; then stifling a heavy groan, in the calmest voice he could assume, but whose tones were still deeply mournful, he said, “Even so—even so, Madame De l'Espoir ! I must speak with you immediately and privately.”

Gertrude did not again raise her eyes to her husband ; but her whole air and attitude spoke in silent but eloquent language, that from him, and not from her, the answer to this request must come.

Vandeleur's heart bled within him. The gay, the happy, the playful, idolized Gertrude,

thus in a few short months so completely subdued to the tyrannical will of a cruel and unprincipled stranger, who had defrauded her of herself! And, now he clearly read the story of that wasted and attenuated form, and that faded cheek.—His feelings were becoming uncontrollable.

“Gertrude,” said he, seizing her arm with a grasp that seemed to have less of tenderness than determination, — “Gertrude, this is all madness! I must speak with you yourself, and that instantly:” and he would have dragged her forwards, though she clung wildly to her husband’s arm, but that he, politely interposing, intimated how deeply he must be concerned in all that concerned her, and invited Major Vandeleur to take a seat in their carriage and accompany them to their house.

Vandeleur was absolutely disconcerted by his coolness; and the more so, as poor Gertrude’s feeble resistance, when he would have dragged her forwards, showed him that the count had

her obedience at least on his side. He felt then how ridiculous, as well as useless, would be any violence on his part ; and suddenly making an effort over himself, as he looked on Gertrude's shrinking and shuddering form, and saw the company now beginning to flock out to where the party stood, he hastily intimated his acceptance of De l'Espoir's offer ; but with a manner intended to convey to him that he only accepted it in order, thereby, to procure for himself the opportunity he desired, of learning all he required to know, and then acting upon that knowledge. It did not suit De l'Espoir's purpose to understand this silent, and therefore doubtful language ; and affecting to take his acceptance in all courtesy, they proceeded down stairs.

“Gertrude, take Major Vandeleur's arm,” said De l'Espoir ; “you are not able to support yourself.” But Gertrude, muttering something unintelligibly, declined this permission.

The few moments that separated them whilst proceeding to the carriage, enabled Vandeleur

in some degree to collect his ideas and spirits from the confusion and hurry into which they had been thrown. He asked himself, now that he had found those he had sought so eagerly, what object he had in view. Was it a gratification of his own desire for revenge? or was it an anxiety to serve the ill-starred Gertrude in any manner that might yet be possible? Surely it was the latter; and he would have considered himself cruelly selfish to have sacrificed the chance of that possibility to any other feeling. Viewing the matter in this light, he saw that to take the punishment of De l'Espoir into his own hands would be madness; for what could ensue from such a mode of proceeding, but ridicule and calumny, and an attraction of the public attention to Gertrude's sad story, which, at the present juncture, and in a foreign country, with only her former lover for her protector and advocate, might prove fatal alike to her fame and life. In order, however, to ascertain how he might render her the service he desired, it was

necessary that he should have a private interview with herself, lest, from his being still in total ignorance of all the springs and counter-springs of the overwhelming circumstances that had taken place, he should, in attempting her rescue, either militate against her own wishes, or plunge her into deeper destruction. To obtain this interview, enough had already passed to show him that he must conciliate the count.

Nothing could be more abhorrent to the noble soul of Vandeleur, than anything like treachery or deceit ; but when he considered whose life and reputation were at stake, and by what villainous means they had been placed in jeopardy, he could not refuse to impose upon himself the task of suppressing his indignation for the moment, and, by accepting De l'Espoir's offered civility, avail himself of the only means in his power to find out how matters really stood. He had been deeply penetrated—heart-struck by Gertrude's clinging to that stranger's arm to protect herself from him : but though this cir-

cumstance served the more fully to convince him of the impropriety and impolicy of any violent measures on his part, and though her whole air and appearance spoke of subdued and rigorous observance of duty, yet not for a moment, even to his agitated and searching scrutiny, did it betray one softer feeling towards him whom she clung to as her husband ; and Vandeleur felt that from her own ingenuous lips alone, could he hope to learn what plan would be safe or advisable for him to pursue at this fearful crisis. At present he saw not how this was to be obtained ; but, as a step towards it, he accepted De l'Espoir's offer of a seat in his carriage, and in the course of their drive suffered him to converse as if no deadly feud was between them ; and while affording him such information as he required upon the subject of the property that, by her father's death, devolved on Gertrude, he kept clear of all mention of the suit instituted against them by the heir-at-law.

How far De l'Espoir was in reality deceived by this apparent quiescence of Vandeleur, cannot be precisely known ; but it was evident he chose to accept it as sincere ; and although upon arriving at the hotel which he inhabited, he did not repeat his invitation to Vandeleur to enter, but, on the contrary, apologised for omitting to do so by the lateness of the hour, yet he begged the favour of a visit from him next morning, in order to enter more fully upon the business of the property to which the latter was executor.

Never in the course of Vandeleur's existence did he labour under such a feeling of oppression—of suffocation from suppressed emotion of various kinds, as when, on promising to comply with De l'Espoir's request, he coldly bade good-night to Gertrude, and stepped from the carriage to pursue his way homewards. He gasped, and gulped the air even audibly ; set his teeth, and clenched and opened his hands. It was not from anger, grief, or amazement : it

was merely an effort of nature to relieve him by bodily exertion from the excruciating moral restraint he had laboured under for the last half-hour.

During the drive from the theatre, Gertrude had sat back in one corner of the carriage, perfectly still and silent. She had wrapped her face in her veil from the first moment, and she never uncovered it until Vandeleur left them. No sigh, no groan escaped her ; but in one of the furtive glances which Vandeleur ventured to dart towards her, as a pale, lonely, lamp threw its sickly ray into their carriage, he thought he perceived the black gauze pressed more closely to her face, and it seemed to have become dense and humid. The sight of this had probably contributed to his keen agony of emotion ; but it would be doing him the grossest injustice to attribute it all to that circumstance. In fact, the human heart is not capable of harbouring at the same time more than a certain quantity of different feelings, if we may

use the expression: one may fill it even to bursting, but a thousand can do no more, and must each be diminished in proportion to the variety. No man ever loved a woman more fondly, more entirely, more devotedly, than did Vandeleur his young bride, without one alloying circumstance or feeling. But when she was snatched from his arms, and, when he found her again, the wife of another man, indignation against her betrayer and the murderer of her brother, as he believed him to be, together with the overwhelming anxiety he felt for the fate that was now impending over her, necessarily produced the effect of keeping passion in the background for the present; and in hoping to see expiated the death of Herbert, by that of his slayer, and so freeing Gertrude from her thralldom, not a selfish feeling or unholy wish had one moment's existence in his breast. Indeed, had he contemplated such a termination, he must have seen that the hand that delivered over her husband to die the death, could

never again in common decency be clasped in hers : but he did not think of this, for this termination was not his object. But, though the sun of passion had sunk for the present beneath the billows of anxiety and despair, the pure and chastened beam that still hovered around Gertrude, showed that it had only yielded to the influence of the barriers that were interposed between her and its radiance, but still preserved its own existence.

I do not take occasion here to speak of Vandeleur's principles, moral or religious ; for though we may trust they would have had their weight, and influence, in subduing every wish that the forced change in his circumstances now rendered eriminal, yet I do not seek to attribute to them, what, in fact, was owing to the causes I have already mentioned ; and, without anything more than this, he now devoted his energies and his life to Gertrude's service, with feelings that, at the present moment, might have become a brother.

Upon reaching his own hotel he flung himself into a chair, and after an hour or two spent in, or rather yielded up to, vague want of thought, he began to deem it time to make an effort to compose himself, collect his ideas, and endeavour to form some plan likely to bring about the desired interview. He could scarcely tell whether he was most glad or sorry to feel, or to imagine, that he had not deceived De l'Espoir into any real confidence in him; for, though it left him no grounds on which to build for a private opportunity of addressing Gertrude in the next morning's visit, there was something consolatory to his feelings in not having acted his part too well. Yet again he blamed himself for this, when he recollected how time was passing; and that while he was thus coquetting with his own pride or principles, the fatal warrant might arrive to arrest Gertrude.

After a night spent without even an attempt at courting sleep, he came to the determination of writing a note to her, beseeching her, in such

terms as she could not feel justified in refusing, to strike out some plan for granting him an immediate interview, and of trusting to chance or circumstance for being able to convey this note to her in the course of the projected visit. The more obvious mode of committing it either to the post, or to the care of a servant, he at once rejected, as being perhaps fraught with a degree of danger to her, the extent of which he had no means of estimating, and had but too much reason to fear might be extreme. Indeed, every circumstance attending this transaction, served to mark more and more emphatically, that the fewer were the persons concerned in its accomplishment, the surer would be its success.

At the appointed hour he set out upon his promised visit, and was received by De l'Espoir alone.

He inquired for Gertrude: the reply was slight, but sufficient to show Vandeleur that he was not to expect to see her that morning. This, he determined, must be amended; and ac-

cordingly, in the course of the information he afforded De l'Espoir on the matters of business between them, he contrived, with some adroitness, to make it appear that Gertrude's presence was essentially necessary to confirm or elucidate some points at issue.

De l'Espoir despatched a servant to require her to appear; but it was a considerable time before the order was obeyed. De l'Espoir sent again, and in a more peremptory tone. She came at last—and Vandeleur was astonished to perceive that she still wore the black gauze veil of the evening before. Apparently De l'Espoir was astonished also; for he immediately exclaimed, “My dear! why, then, are you veiled?”

“My eyes are exceedingly weak, and I cannot bear the light to-day,” she said timidly, as she placed herself, with only a slight inclination of her head towards Vandeleur, with her face turned from it.

But no manœuvre could conceal from the

anxious eyes of her devoted friend that hers were red and swollen with recent weeping. His heart fluttered in his bosom, seemed to rise to his throat, and it was with an effort he prevented the tremor of his frame from becoming visible. Why had she been weeping at that especial hour? and why was she so anxious to conceal the fact? Was it from him or from her husband that she wished to conceal it? Had she known that he was in the house? and had she remembered the time when she would not have been exiled from his presence?

De l'Espoir abruptly resumed the conversation; Vandeleur endeavoured to follow him—but, in spite of all his efforts, an additional degree of coldness, and almost disgust, was apparent in his manner; while Gertrude sat apart, cold and motionless, like one dead to every subject that has interest for others in this life. When appealed to, she either bent her head in acquiescence, or gave a reply, when necessary, in the shortest form and lowest possible tone.

Vandeleur could not in such tones recognise, in the least, the joyous ones whose notes of gladness used to call out an echo wherever they were heard. He suffered the conversation to drag on some time longer, when, seeing no chance of accomplishing his purpose, but, on the contrary, fearing every moment that De l'Espoir would dismiss his unhappy wife with the intimation that her presence was no longer necessary, he slowly rose to take his leave ; and then casting his eyes, apparently in curiosity, round the foreign reception-room, but in reality in the forlorn hope of seeing some safe hiding-place for his billet, he spied a work-box of Gertrude's on a distant table.

“ An English work-box, I protest ! ” he exclaimed : and advancing towards it in well-feigned enthusiasm,—although, had it been of foreign manufacture, it would have served his purpose equally,—he took it up, and inquired how it had found its way so far.

De l'Espoir, to his great annoyance, fol-

lowed him to the table, and answered, "Oh! why madame has a kind of liking for England still, and purchased this box from a poor woman who had it to dispose of."

"Well, you will admit, count," said Vandeleur, "that even in such trifles as these,—I beg pardon," he said, half-playfully turning to Gertrude, as he still held the box in one hand, while he took up its cushions and trinkets with the other,—“but even here, I think you will acknowledge that if we fail in *prettiness*, we excel in all that is useful and substantial. Even in this box, now, here is an air of *comfort*, if I may use the expression; and that, you know, is a quality which we boast as peculiarly English.”

"Why, amen, and so be it," said De l'Espoir. "I'm sure we do not grudge comfort to those who require it so much: for us, we can well dispense with it for the sake of joy. But it is not *my* part to speak against England," he added, politely bowing.

Vandeleur felt no inclination to pursue the

subject, and returned his bow with one of farewell. De l'Espoir accompanied him down-stairs ; and whether it was that Vandeleur, in the instant he had turned to beg Gertrude's pardon for ranking a lady's work-box amongst the trifles of the earth, had contrived to convey to her by a look that he had deposited a note ; or whether innate perception of his every movement, and sympathy with his every feeling, had told her that the exaggerated interest he manifested at the sight of a common work-box of a country he had just left, as she supposed, and was free to return to, could only be to conceal some other interest,—it matters not to inquire ; since the effect was, in either case, precisely the same ; namely, to cause her, the moment their receding steps convinced her she was safe, to spring from her chair to that distant table—raise the cushion of the box—seize from beneath its silky softness the hidden billet—hastily transplant it to the concealment of her reti-

cule, and return to her chair as if she had never moved from it.

Alas ! alas ! for the fate that could have taught caution even to ingenuousness itself !

It was no premeditation of deceit ; it was the mere instinct of nature, when placed in a position to require it. Probably, had there been time for reflection, she would in her scrupulousness have spurned at the impulse, as unbecoming her situation as De l'Espoir's wife : but, fortunately for her, she had not the time, and thus escaped the impropriety of determined deception ; while she was spared all that would have ensued from the note falling into the hands of De l'Espoir. It soon appeared, however, that whatever means Vandeleur had adopted to communicate the secret to her, suspicion had done as much for him. For, no sooner did he see Vandeleur out of the house, than, bounding up the stairs again, with strides that passed over several at each step, he proceeded direct to the table on

which stood the eventful box ; and first deliberately raising the cushion, then each trinket he had seen Vandeleur touch, he finally turned the box upside down, and emptied the contents upon the table.

The search was of course fruitless ; and for a moment he seemed ashamed of himself, and endeavoured hastily to replace them. Finding it not an easy task, however, he turned to Gertrude, and said, “ See, my dear, I have disarranged this box, that has met with such admiration ; you can settle it again. For my part I see nothing to admire so much in it—do you ? or *did you ?*” he said emphatically, and fixing his eyes upon her.

“ You are fully aware of the feelings that induced me to purchase it,” she said with a sigh : “ admiration was the last feeling I thought of.”

“ Hah ! what other ? *love* perhaps ?” he said, rather in reference to his own meaning, than to her answer.

She continued steadily: "Yes; love to my country, love to all that belongs to it."

De l'Espoir's eyes scowled for a moment: but he had reasons for not wishing to quarrel with Gertrude just then; so he subdued whatever he might have felt, and, with that self-command of which he was eminently master, he said, "Well, my dear, I shall no longer feel jealous of your love to England. I trust we shall very soon visit, if not reside there. In the mean time, I am sorry that I am obliged to leave you for the rest of this day. I fear I cannot return before night, as I am going into the country with our friend Dumoulin; but I hope you will be able to amuse yourself in the mean time."

"Oh! certainly," said Gertrude. "Are you quite sure you will not return before night?"

"Quite sure. But why do you ask?"

"Merely," said Gertrude, "as in that case I shall not expect you to dinner."

And it was the simple truth. But how differ-

ently did the dark mind of De l'Espoir interpret it! "No, I cannot be back before quite night; so, adieu!" he repeated, and departed, apparently perfectly satisfied.

Scarcely did De l'Espoir himself ascend the stairs, in search of the suspected note, with more rapid flight, than did Gertrude now, to gain the privacy of her own chamber, and devour its contents. But here all similitude between them ended. No sooner did Gertrude feel herself free from the sickening and exasperating presence of her loathed betrayer, and tyrant husband, than her feelings subsided into their natural gentle and feminine channel; and when she proceeded to draw the billet from her reticule, and her eye dwelt, for the first time for so long a period, upon the well-known characters traced by that beloved hand, and saw the impression of his cipher seal, she found such feelings revive within her breast as caused her to let it fall from her hand upon the floor, and, closing her eyes, almost vow to look upon it no more

And now it was, that, for the first time, commenced the struggle between duty and affection in her innocent and bleeding bosom. Hitherto, in weeping over the peculiar misery of her lot, the loss of Vandeleur, and her accursed union with De l'Espoir, they all appeared so interwoven with, so much the consequence of the miserable catastrophe of her brother's death, that, in weeping for all, she felt only to weep for that one event ; and the thought that Vandeleur had believed her guilty, and had cast her from his heart, had so deepened the gulf between them, that never, in looking into it, could she trace even the shadow of former happiness. She lost all remembrance of what she had been, what she might have been, and only lived in the misery of the present ; waiting with an anxiety and eagerness, that she sometimes was obliged to pray for strength to resist, for the moment that was to set her spirit free, and to reunite her, as she fondly hoped, to her beloved brother. She looked to his spirit now as

her only friend—the only one, except the Divine Being, from whom she hoped for justice or for mercy !

Such had been her feelings hitherto. But the sight of Vandeleur—her first, her only love ;—he who had gathered the fluttering feelings of her young heart unto himself, and first given them, as it were, “ a local habitation and a name ;”—he who had given re-assurance, sanction, and a haven of welcome, to feelings which she had been half afraid were unbecoming to woman’s dignity, and valued them as the most precious treasure of his existence ;—*he* had again appeared before her, and not only manifested by his manner deep and absorbing interest in her fate, but even sought, by means she knew to be uncongenial to his nature, to renew an intercourse with her. “ For what purpose ? to what could he mean it should tend ? ” were questions she asked herself, and which, though unable to answer definitively, all ended in the one conviction, that he could intend nothing unworthy of her or of himself. But

then—was his opinion in this or any other particular any longer to be her guide? Could she indeed trust her heart's feelings in a renewed intercourse with him, when she already felt it beat so wildly at merely seeing again his handwriting addressed to her,—so wildly, that she dared not cast another look upon it, until she had endeavoured to school that heart into a state of calmness becoming the wedded wife of another man?

For this purpose she flung herself upon her knees, and, uttering a fervent prayer to be purified, guided, and directed, she bowed her head upon the seat at which she knelt, and endeavoured dispassionately to consider whether or not she ought to destroy the billet without allowing herself the indulgence of perusing it; or whether, considering the circumstances in which she stood, she was not justified in, at least, hearing the wishes of one whom she looked upon as little less than perfect. She considered the serious interests that were involved

in her destiny, and she remembered, above all things, how necessary it might be to Vandeleur's own peace of mind, to hear from herself, apart from the influence of one of whom he had reason to suspect so much of evil, that she really was De l'Espoir's wife, and determined to conduct herself as such.

This last consideration appeared to her decisive; and with childish scrupulosity forbearing from again looking upon the seal or superscription, she opened the note and read as follows :—

“ Gertrude ! By all you ever were to me, or I to you, under a parent's sanction, I conjure you to grant me ten minutes' conference with you in private, if possible this very day. For this purpose I shall, after this morning's visit, hurry home, procure the disguise of a mendicant friar, return and hover about your hotel until I find that the count goes out. I shall then apply for admission to your presence, by saying I *was once in England* ; and, if possible, do not refuse

to see me : but, if absolutely impossible on that occasion, have a line ready to be given to me, as if wrapped round an alms-giving, to tell me how soon it will be possible ; for see you I must. I shall only appeal to your knowledge of my veracity, when I assure you that the communication I have to make to you involves more than your life, and that my feelings in requesting this interview shrink not from the eye of the God whom we both adore.

“ G. V.”

The effect of this note upon Gertrude was almost electrical. Hitherto her energies, her very ideas, had been, by deep and overwhelming despair, subdued and paralysed into a quiescence, and timidity, alike foreign to her intelligent mind, and buoyant character. But now the vital spark, as it were, being rekindled, by the influential feeling of a friend and a protector being within her reach, she started to her feet, and exclaimed aloud, “ *I will see him ! I will hear what he has to say !* To the duties that

have been forced upon me, I trust I ever shall be faithful; but it cannot be that I am to endanger—I know not what; run risks the extent of which I cannot estimate; set at nought every friendly caution, and perhaps extend the ruin I have set at work still more widely,—unless I have first asked the permission to act right, which I know would be refused me! and to ask it of whom? Oh, God! oh, God!” She paused, and a cold shudder passed over her. “But this latter is not the feeling I am to encourage now,” she said, recollecting herself; “and in meeting Vandeleur,—*Vandeleur*? do I indeed again pronounce that name?—in meeting him, as I believe I am justified in doing, I must be doubly watchful that no feeling creeps in, which will cause me hereafter to repent it.”

She had no sooner come to this resolution, than, in order to keep her spirits in the calm and quiet tone she deemed becoming, she took up a book and attempted to read. But she over-

calculated her own composure : whatever she might be enabled outwardly to assume, all was excitement and perturbation within. Nothing beneath heaven itself could be purer or holier than her intentions and her feelings ; yet something there was that told her she was once more incurring a deep responsibility, should her husband return and find her engaged with Vandeleur. But no, that was not to be apprehended : he had made an appointment for the day, and he had no inducement to forego it for his home. But, should the circumstance ever reach his ears ?—Impossible ! No one there had ever seen Vandeleur ; and besides, he was to be disguised ; and she could trust even her fame itself to his precautions. But should her own feelings betray her ?—she clasped her hands, and prayed to be “led not into temptation.”

The words were yet upon her lips, when one of the servants came to inform her that a friar, who had once been in England, was come to speak with the English lady.

Gertrude underwent a violent palpitation, but desired him to be shown into a small room which was inside that they generally used for dining, and which no one ever entered except Gertrude herself; who sometimes retired thither for the sake of gazing out upon the champaign view which its window commanded, and endeavouring to conjure up some fanciful resemblance to England. Here she thought the communication which Vandeleur had to make, and which she could not but suppose was of a vital and agitating nature, would be less liable to interruption, while the assumed character of her visiter took from it all appearance of strangeness.

Thither, then, he was shown; and thither, after the delay of a very few minutes, Gertrude repaired to receive the secret visit of the man she had loved so fondly and lost so sadly.

CHAPTER XVII.

The lady of his love—oh, she was changed
As by the sickness of the soul! her mind
Had wander'd from its dwelling, and her eyes
They had not their own lustre, but the look
Which is not of the earth.

BYRON.

WHEN Gertrude entered the dining-room, within which was the little saloon, or closet, in which Vandeleur awaited her, her head was still enveloped in the dark, mourning veil. As Vandeleur approached to meet her, however, she put forth her hand to him from beneath it, and, whatever might be her internal emotions, welcomed him with a calm and dignified seeming.

He took her hand, and led her back to the

little apartment in deep and mournful silence ; but, as if feeling the propriety of following her example of composure, and of entering at once upon the business that brought him before her, the moment they were seated, he gently replaced her hand upon her lap, and passing his own over his face, endeavoured to select the gentlest and least startling terms in which to communicate to her, that a warrant was already issued to apprehend her for the murder of her brother ! It was in vain, however, that he ran over the vocabulary in his mind—all seemed equally revolting that would have served his purpose, and any he could find courage to utter would have utterly failed in conveying an idea of so horrible a fact. Gertrude, in the mean time, waited in pointed silence for the disclosure that was to form the excuse and justification of their clandestine meeting.

At length, absolutely in despair at the task he had undertaken, and agitated by all the circumstances attending it, Vandeleur leaned his

head back against the wall and uttered a heavy groan.

Gertrude turned toward, him in terror ; and having vainly waited a few minutes longer for him to speak, she at last said in a very low and tremulous tone—" You sought this meeting ; have you forgotten wherefore ?"

He turned his eyes slowly and heavily towards her : the folds of her veil had fallen a little to one side, and gave to view that still youthful and lovely face, with its altered expression and faded features.

Vandeleur, as it were, seized upon the glimpse thus accidentally afforded him ; and after suffering his eyes to run hastily two or three times over her whole person, as if to compare it with what it had been, and to mark the ravages which suffering and sorrow had wrought upon it, he suddenly dropped his head between his hands, and burst into convulsive sobbing.

Gertrude was immeasurably terrified,—not by the disclosure this might portend, but by the vio-

lence of his emotion. She rose hastily from her seat, sank down again as hastily, drew her handkerchief rapidly and almost wildly from hand to hand incessantly, while she stole towards Vandeleur glances of mingled tenderness and alarm. His agony seemed to augment—to become uncontrollable—and looking up towards heaven, in a voice of desperation and deprecation, he almost shouted forth, “Oh, God! oh, God! have mercy on us both!”

Gertrude sprang from her seat; and looking wildly on him, and all round the little apartment in which they sat, attempted to spring past him towards the door, in order to make her escape.

He started, and seized her by the arm. “Would you indeed leave me, then, Gertrude? Have you no feeling for me remaining?” He looked on her face, from which her veil had now completely fallen, and was arrested by its wild and wandering expression. Perceiving her lips moving rapidly, he listened to endeavour to catch her words; he concluded she was praying,

for he heard distinctly the words “lead us not into temptation,” emphatically repeated.

He was affected—alarmed. “Compose yourself, my dearest Gertrude,” he said more gently: “I only meant to ask you, have you indeed no explanation to give me of all the fearful past?”

“Explanation!—explanation *now!*” she repeated, with lips and eyes distended in astonishment, and the latter still wandering rapidly over everything in the room except Vandeleur himself. “Metlinks it were rather late now. Ha! ha! ha! No! no! to what purpose *now?* Besides,” she added in a lower and a calmer voice,—“besides, indeed I *dare* not!” and she bent her eyes upon the ground.

“Why?” asked Vandeleur soothingly: “is he not absent for the whole day?”

“Oh! I spoke not, I thought not of *him*,” she replied very mournfully, “when I said I durst not enter into any explanation of the past. And wherefore in any case, Vandeleur? for *you* could not believe ill of *me*;—yet, to be sure, it

must be all strangely mysterious to you. I can remember *that* now; yet I dare not attempt to satisfy you at present. *No—I dare not,*” she said musingly. Then suddenly turning to him, added :

“ Harkee, Godfrey ; I have something to tell you that will shock you :” and she turned as pale as death, laid her hand upon his arm, and seeming to speak with a great and painful effort, whispered—“ *Godfrey ! I have been out of my senses for a long, long period !*” Having uttered these frightful words, she looked fixedly in his eyes, as if eagerly seeking for the shock she felt so sure of having imparted.

She was not disappointed. Vandeleur’s previous emotion seemed subdued in a moment, and his face reflected the paleness of hers. He gazed upon her with a sick sensation at his heart, such as he had never felt before ; and his feelings at that moment were of so pure, so holy, so subdued a character, that he internally cursed as idle the prejudices of the world, which forbade

him to fold her to his heart, and bid her take comfort there.

He restrained himself, however, lest he should startle her again ; and after gazing on her for a few minutes, with an expression from which she did not shrink, but, on the contrary, seemed to find morbidly soothing, he said—"This, then, is the cause of your being lost so long ; this is the reason why every effort your friends have made to find you has been hitherto unavailing!"

"My friends!—efforts to find me!" she repeated. "Who are those friends? and what those efforts? But no matter—no matter now; tell me not of them: the die is cast, the past is passed, and surely I, at least, may say, 'I've known the worst.'"

"God in his mercy grant it may be so!" said Vandeleur emphatically. "But tell me—tell me, Gertrude," and he would have taken her hand, but she gently prevented him,—“tell me before we proceed farther—and you need neither be offended by the question, nor fear that it is

asked with any selfish view — such, indeed, is at an end with me for ever ;—but tell me, as the friend and guardian on whom your only parent bestowed you, and whose only hope is still to fulfil that trust without other reward now than that of serving you, — have you nothing to complain of on the part of this De l'Espoir, of which the law might avail itself to rid you of him for ever ?”

“ Alas ! alas ! no ;—I suppose not. We were legally married with my consent.”

Vandeleur started.

“ Nay, start not at that, Godfrey ; let it go with the rest of the mysteries involving me, until I feel able to unfold them. And now I feel so much calmer, that I think I could almost venture. But it was not for that we met,” she said, recollecting herself,—“ oh, no, not for that ! And, as I said before, to what could the recital now tend ? For even were it possible that I could be freed, why should I make the effort now ? I trust my sufferings, with my life, are

near their close ; and what could it avail now, except to drag before the world a creature who ought rather to seek some hole in which to hide her head ?”

“ But why—why this, Gertrude ? On the contrary, would you not wish that your fair fame and innocence should shine before the world, while he who is the transgressor should pay the forfeit of his crimes ?”

“ And what might that forfeit be ?”

Vandeleur cast down his eyes, and in a low and expressive tone said, “ That is as circumstances should be traced to and proved against him.”

“ I understand you—I know to what you allude,” said Gertrude, in a calmer voice than Vandeleur expected. “ But is it my part to stand up against *my husband* ? Oh ! no,—rather than voluntarily swerve from my sworn duty, let me drain the cup to the very dregs ; *they* must prove their own remedy at last :” and she held up her hands and eyes to heaven.

“But there will be no occasion for you to do thus. Let the law take its own course; only do you retire from the storm for a little while until it passes by, that you may not indeed be called upon in a manner from which you should and ought to shrink.”

“And who, then, is to originate a prosecution against the count? My poor father is no more; surely, it is not——” She hesitated.

“No, it is *not me*, Gertrude. I, alas! have no claim to take proceedings against him. But there is one prepared to do it; one, in short, *has* instituted it,—one, of whom none of us ever thought; and it is upon this subject that I am here.” He paused.

“Who can that person be?” exclaimed Gertrude in the utmost astonishment. “Who in this world, besides yourself, feels any interest in me? or, if they did, who has the claim?”

“It may not be interest in you that instigates them, my dearest, best Gertrude,” said Vandeleur, inexpressibly affected by her utter

unconsciousness of the cruelty that was meditated against her ; and feeling, from his own excitement, as if each word he uttered must open her eyes forcibly to the truth ; “ but—but—do you not remember your kinsman, George Evelyn ? ”

“ My cousin George ! What interest can he, of all persons, take in me ? I have scarcely ever even seen him ! Can it be gratitude for papa’s having given him his commission ? ”

Vandeleur’s brow became contracted from very pain, as he said in a low tone, with his eyes bent on the floor, “ Are you not aware that he is the next heir after you to your father’s property ? ”

“ Yes ; but what then ? Alas ! I am still in his way—still a shield between him and De l’Espoir.”

Vandeleur forbore to answer ; but his expressive silence arrested Gertrude’s attention. She fixed her eyes eagerly, devouringly, on his embarrassed countenance and working features ;

then suddenly and at once, as if a new light broke in upon her, she sprang to her feet—clasped her hands tightly together—and after pausing for a moment, as if to satisfy herself in her own conjecture, she exclaimed aloud, as her colour varied from pale to red, and from red to pale, in a second—“Hah! I see—I see it all now: how stupid it was of me to hesitate! I understand it now! Mr. Evelyn would have me hanged, and himself inherit my father’s property!”

Vandeleur, who had also risen from his seat when she sprang up, now enclosed both her clasped hands between his, and suffered his silence and deeply sorrowful countenance to tell her that she had guessed rightly.

“It is even so then?” she exclaimed, looking on him with wild and heart-breaking anxiety. “Gracious and eternal God!—oh! Godfrey, Godfrey!” and as if her last hour were indeed come, when all artificial restraints are dispensed with from the consciousness that their

infringement can lead to nothing more—or as if the deep and awful reality of her feelings at that moment refused to descend to the petty distinctions she had till now so scrupulously observed, she slowly sat down again, and laying her head upon Vandeleur's shoulder, burst into the first tears she had shed since they met.

He was rejoiced to find her over-tried feelings vent themselves in this way; and it need scarcely be said, that she did not weep alone. His first impulse, when she leaned her head towards him, again was to catch her to his heart: but the very confidingness and self-abandonment of the movement restrained him once more, that he might not startle her from that resting-place, and that he might not take advantage of the temporary forgetfulness in her, which he could not plead in excuse for himself. He contented himself with still tenderly holding her hands, and suffering his own tears to mingle with hers as they fell together upon them.

She indulged herself for a few minutes in

weeping bitterly, but in perfect silence; and Vandeleur was careful not to interrupt the natural and refreshing current: but as she gazed upon her own and his tears as they poured upon their united hands, apparently the sight of his sorrow began to affect her even above her own, and she hastened to relieve it.

“Dear Godfrey, what are *you* weeping for? You do not believe there is any fear of this being proved? No; if there is sense or justice upon earth, it could not stand one single moment!”

“Blessed be God for that word, at all events!” said Vandeleur. “But tell me — tell me why you say so. Tell me all or something respecting it; and, above all, tell me, my own Gertrude, why you are De l’Espoir’s wife?”

Vandeleur asked this question as the mystery he was most desirous to have solved, not from any selfish anxiety, so much as being that which seemed to throw the deepest colouring over the rest; and he wished above all things to learn

what defence the unfortunate girl had it in her power to offer to those who should be interested in accusing her. It served at present, however, only to startle her delicacy, by recalling her recollection. She raised her head from his shoulder, and gazed with a sort of bewildered look of interrogation, first in his face—then on their clasped hands—and gently, but decidedly, drawing hers from between his, she pressed one upon her forehead, and said faintly, “Do not call me *your* Gertrude; it confounds dates in my mind: and, besides, it is not proper *now*.” She sighed heavily. “No; I am again unfit to enter on that dismal tale. Oh! Herbert, Herbert!” and again her tears flowed bitterly.

“Tell me rather,” she resumed, “all particulars about Mr. Evelyn’s intentions against me; and, believe me, I will hear it calmly now; the shock is past.”

It was indeed necessary that she should be informed of them; and accordingly Vandeleur, in the best manner he was able, informed her

of a warrant being already issued to apprehend her, and her husband, for the murder of her brother. He told her, that to apprise her of this, before it should reach her in another form, in order that she might form her own plans accordingly, was the cause of his being now in Russia; and that those plans might be formed according to her own wishes, and free from the baneful influence of the count, was the cause of his having sought this private interview.

Gertrude heard him to the end without again betraying the slightest agitation. It was peculiarly one of her characteristics to bestow and accept good-will with equal simplicity, and one glance of affectionate confidence was all the thanks she now offered to Vandeleur. She remained for some minutes perfectly silent, as if considering of all she had heard, and then, apparently having come to some determination, she asked,

“ And why would you not tell the count of this ? ”

Vandeleur, as delicately as he could, suggested to her the possibility of avoiding the trial, should she shrink from it, by making her escape, and leaving De l'Espoir to clear her fame by his own condemnation.

She smiled coldly, and a pink spot became visible for a moment in either cheek.

“No,” said she. “That so hideous, so foul a suspicion should rest upon my name, is indeed severe to bear; so severe, that I would brave all the horrors of such a trial to wash it out, if I had still a link to bind me to this world. But I have not—I have not; and to one who bears in her breast the dreadful consciousness of having done what I have done, however innocent in intention, it matters little what more coals are heaped upon my head. The count has tried to drag me again into the world; in shame and in sorrow I might do my penance in it, but in any other light—never, never! But what makes you so pale?—what have I said anew to shock you?”

“ Did you say—did you say, Gertrude—my unhappy, ill-starred Gertrude,—did you say that it was you indeed——” and his pale quivering lips refused to finish the fearful question.

She took it up,—“ That it was I did it ? Yes, truly was it I !—these hands, Vandeleur ! And thinkest thou I then could care what became of my wretched life !”

Nothing in nature could be more dreadful than the expression of Gertrude’s face as she uttered these words, and held up her hands to show them to Vandeleur as the instruments of her brother’s death. No sculpture, no painting, no words could convey an idea of the fearful contrast between the pale and beautiful features, and calm low tone of voice, and the deep, deep agony of the countenance, and the dilating and contracting pupil of the unquiet eye.

Vandeleur shivered, and literally grew cold, as he listened to and looked upon her. He was almost afraid to speak for fear of exciting her feelings still farther, but ventured at last to say,

as gently as he could, “But, dearest Gertrude, you know poor Herbert’s case was already hopeless.”

“It was not—it was not ! Ten million worlds would I give to know it was ! Ay, in spite of all, I might live again, from the very horror of what I have suffered, could I but learn that. But it is over now. No, no ; he was getting better,—wretch that I was ! he was getting better, if I had but left him to Nature. Dr. C. indeed, made my father uneasy about him ; but I think, and always thought, my father misunderstood him, for Herbert’s mind certainly had recovered very considerably.” Then, as a new idea seemed to strike her, “Godfrey !” she exclaimed with sudden energy, “suppose you were to ask the question of Dr. C. ? I could be no worse than I am. And, oh God of heaven ! if he were to say I had only hastened his release——”

She paused, overcome with her own enthusiastic hopes ; but presently observing Vande-

leur's mournful silence, "You do not answer ;— you look sad ?" she gasped forth ; " you have already ascertained that but for me he would have recovered ?"

" No, no, dearest Gertrude, I have not indeed ; but,—I regret to say,—poor Dr. C. is himself no more."

Gertrude uttered a piercing shriek. Perhaps until that moment some indescribable, some undefinable, hope had lingered in her bosom that the heaviest part of her heavy burden of sorrow might yet be removed. It was over now ; for a moment she felt as if she had committed the deed over again. But this could not last : the reality of affliction was too present with her to yield long to an imaginary one ; she even made a powerful effort to bring back her mind to the matter before them.

" Then I will yield myself to my fate. I am the wife of the Count de l'Espoir. I still believe—at least, oh God ! I hope—he was as innocent in intention as I was myself, as to the fearful catastrophe. My resolution is formed

and fixed. It is this: that you, Vandeleur, inform the count of the danger he is threatened with: he is skilled in the ways of the world, and will know what to do; and, as he does, I will do. 'To fulfil my duty, whatever it may be, is but a slight penance for the crime I have committed.'

Vandeleur was about to answer, doubtless to endeavour to lay more clearly before her all she undertook to perform, in adopting this resolution, when a female servant hastily opening the door, announced the unexpected return of De l'Espoir! The woman had no reason to suppose that the mendicant friar was other than he professed himself to be, and her evident alarm seemed only to betray the general feeling excited by De l'Espoir's presence.

But neither Vandeleur nor Gertrude had time to speculate on this, when De l'Espoir himself appeared. There is no use in disguising it—nothing could look more confounded than they both did; and the best proof of how far such confusion may be from guilt, is, that Vandeleur,

who wished to deliver him over to meet his deserts alone, did not betray more than did Gertrude, who had just expressed her sincere determination to abide by him to the last.

De l'Espoir, as usual, was perfectly collected, and apparently composed. The dark malignant expression of his eye, and cold sneer upon his lip, did nothing to contradict this. He removed his hat as he encountered Vandeleur, and calmly said, "So, sir, it is now my turn to give you a surprise," (alluding to the fatal evening in the arbour): "may I beg your presence for a moment in this outer room? You, madam, please to retire with your spy-servant."

There are moments when the weakest exhibit extraordinary courage, if sufficient inducement or provocation is offered to them. Gertrude, although in general subdued in the presence of De l'Espoir, almost to the passiveness of a machine or an idiot, gathering in one moment, from his manner and expression, that

death was in his eye, and remembering that his pistols lay in that outer room, almost already within his grasp—forgot every other feeling in her terror for his and Vandeleur's life, and, suddenly seizing his arm, was about to inform him of the whole object of the meeting.

He did not give her time : he looked upon her one moment with such an expression of fell hatred as a demon might be supposed to cast upon an angel which had thwarted him in some favourite scheme ; then seizing her by the shoulder, flung her from him in the direction of a large metal stove, which stood in the chamber, with a force which would probably have terminated her sorrows at a blow, had not the woman, who still lingered in the room, received her in her arms and borne her from his presence.

Vandeleur now lost all command of himself, and seizing De l'Espoir by the throat, " Monster ! villain ! fiend !" he exclaimed, " would you add one more victim to your list ?"

De l'Espoir made no reply, but in the struggle snatched at a pistol, and calling to Vandeleur to take the other and defend himself, took his stand to shoot him across the table.

Vandeleur recoiled: one second's thought served to convince him, that if Gertrude's husband fell by his hand under such circumstances, her fame was indeed blasted for ever. "Madman! demon! I will not fire!" he said: "I will not take the pistol, lest it should discharge itself at such a monster, and so cheat the hangman, whose gripe is already upon you."

De l'Espoir, in his fury, which was now uncontrollable in proportion to the restraint he was in general capable of imposing on it, either did not understand this threat, or if he did, remembering that his bitterest enemy that moment stood almost within his power, seized the second pistol, and hurling it towards Vandeleur, exclaimed, "Defend yourself, or die the death of a dog." Then, without waiting for an answer, or giving Vandeleur time to put himself in a

posture of defence, he a second time laid weltering in his blood the man who from his earliest youth seemed destined to cross his path.

The report of the pistol immediately brought the numerous domestics, that are always to be seen about the poorest establishment in St. Petersburg, rushing to the room; and De l'Espoir, hurrying from amongst them, without seeming even to hear their questions and exclamations, rushed with demon strides to the chamber of Gertrude, and rudely burst the door open with his foot. He found her lying pale and terrified on a couch. "Ay," he exclaimed, grinding his teeth and extending his arms in fury towards her as he approached—"Ay, you may well be frightened for what your infamy has brought to pass! —your lover lies slain by my hand! And now tell me, I command you, what he meant, or whether he had any meaning, in what he uttered of the hangman being awaiting me?"

Gertrude, without betraying any other emo-

tion than an universal tremor of her person, recapitulated, as well as she could, the purport of the information which Vandeleur had given her.

De l'Espoir listened until she had finished ; then glaring upon her, and setting his teeth more firmly, he advanced quite close up to her, and said fiercely, "I see ! And you were to have eloped with your lover, and to have appeared with him in evidence against me, until you had succeeded in becoming a widow and marrying him!"

Gertrude showed no additional sign of terror at his menacing voice and attitude, but, thinking it right to disabuse him of this error, she simply and gently pronounced the monosyllable "No," in a voice that seemed overstrained and cracked from internal suffering.

"No ! What then ? What may your plans have been, if I may be so bold ?"

"To be guided by you ;" and she sighed heavily.

"Ay ? indeed ! Did Vandeleur, then, come to

caution *me* ?—answer me at once. Did he not urge secrecy from *me* ? Did he not urge you to fly, and to leave me to my fate ?” Gertrude remained silent.

“ It is well,” he said. “ And you were such a dutiful wife that you would not listen to him, I suppose ? and only received him into that closet in disguise in my absence, to lecture him upon the immorality of his conduct ? No, no, Gertrude ; you hate me, and *I hate you* ; and, by all that is sacred ! I would not, for all the possessions now become so precarious, be burthened with you longer. While I thought you a simple, drivelling, but harmless idiot or maniac, you and your estates might have balanced each other ; but now, you may both go to the devil for me ! I loathe you, and I despise them.—Why heard I not of this heir-at-law before ? By Heaven ! I believe Vandeleur is himself the instigator of it all, aided and encouraged by you. But, be it so ; ye shall both be disappointed : I shall not stand a trial which the illiberal feelings

and ignorant prejudices of your brutal country would alike lead them to decide against me. Follow the bent of your own inclinations, and see if the events of this night will not be considered to justify me in seeking my own safety alone." And so saying, he flung out of the chamber.

For some minutes after his departure, Gertrude had not energy sufficient even to rise and ring the bell; and when she did drag her trembling limbs so far, no answer was returned to the summons. She grew frightened now on another score; and, collecting energy from despair, she rang it again, and with so much violence, that the same female who had announced De l'Espoir's return, hastened to her. She inquired calmly if Vandeleur were dead.

"Dead, ma'am! No, Lord love you! nor like to die, say I, if he was taken in time. But what with one thing, and what with another, my own hands are the only surgeon he has had as yet. We had him carried to a room, and I

stopped the wound, which is in his right side."

"Where is the Count De l'Espoir?"

"He is gone out ; and his servant says he was shut up for some time in his room_ first, rolling up papers and taking money out of his desk ; but he gave no orders, and did not say if he would be home to-night."

A conviction instantly flashed upon Gertrude that she should never see him more. She lay back on her seat for a moment overwhelmed with this awful thought, and the peculiar cruelty of abandoning her in such a moment : but, as the original character of poor Gertrude's mind was very far removed from weakness or indecision, however artless and easily guided by those in whom she placed confidence, even the cruel malady which had been forced upon her by her horrible fate, had not had power permanently to impair it, although it left her still liable to over-excitement on certain trials of her feelings. Her principles and excellent under-

standing now came to her support, and told her that a crisis was come when she must act with promptitude and decision, or involve one dearer than herself in calumny and disgrace, if not endanger his life.

Without a moment's hesitation, she desired that Monsieur Dumoulin, a French physician who was on terms of great intimacy both with De l'Espoir and herself, and who attended her with skill and kindness during her illness, should be sent for. He was one of those gentlemen who supported her out of the theatre the evening before, when Vandeleur discovered her ; and although she was conscious that her agitation on that occasion, together with the scene now awaiting him, must raise strange surmises in his mind, the energetic resolution she had formed, to be guided throughout this critical period by reason, rather than by feeling, enabled her to disregard what at a calmer moment might have caused her to hesitate about employing him.

As soon as she had given orders to this effect, she sat down to collect her thoughts, and consider seriously what was now in her power to rescue herself from the fearful and desolate situation she was in at that moment.

That her husband *might* return she knew was possible ; but, even if he should, she was but too well aware, that for her to continue with him after the events of that evening, and the impression they were sure to leave upon his dark and wicked mind, would be absolutely impossible, even to a spirit so bruised and broken as was hers. She could not face a new species of sorrow in the worst form—that of suspicion and disgrace.

But, that he would *not* return she did not even for a moment doubt. The threat of leaving her, which she now believed he had put in execution, he had often uttered before, when, exasperated by the sight of her silent and uncomplaining, but undisguised and hopeless misery, he cursed the life of her father, which

made him, as he brutally expressed it, serve so hard an apprenticeship for his property.

Nor was this, even when uttered, a mere vague or idle threat. He had often weighed the matter seriously in his mind, during the period of Gertrude's mental alienation and subsequent suffering; but there were considerations which served at that time to avert its being put into execution,—the distant prospect of still reaping the rich reward of what he now called *his* endurance—the unheard-of barbarity of abandoning a creature in the state to which he had reduced Gertrude, to the care of total strangers, in a foreign and far distant country—and perhaps more than all, the interest felt for her by her attending physician, who accompanied them to Russia, and the nature of whose influence over De l'Espoir will be hereafter explained. But now that the prospect of his ever obtaining the coveted wealth, which had led him so far on the road to perdition, appeared surrounded with difficulties and dangers which he had little hope

of being able to overcome under all the attending circumstances ; now that he either thought, or affected to think, that Gertrude had found a friend whose counsels she preferred to his,—what was there to restrain him from seeking safety in flight ; and, hushing up the story, as he had done others before, leaving Gertrude to stand between him and her kinsman's claim, and reappear himself on a stage where his talents and adroitness should cause the whole matter to be laughed at as a story in romance ?

It is not to be supposed that Gertrude carried her meditations on his frame of mind quite so far as this ; but she keenly remembered enough of the past to form her conclusions of the future : and now it was that she blessed, as inspiration, the fancy which had induced her to select St. Petersburg as the remote scene in which she was, in compliance with her husband, to be forced to enter the world again. But how to render that fancy available, now required her deepest consideration.

Not yet a fortnight in St. Petersburg, she was still a perfect stranger, not only to its habits and customs, but to every human being that breathed within it, except the physician who had accompanied them thither, De l'Espoir himself, and him who now lay stretched upon a sick bed by his hand. Even the servants were strangers to her ; as De l'Espoir deemed it judicious to remove from about her, in her convalescence, as many as possible of those who had been witnesses of her illness : and thus was she left without even the humblest friend to whom she could turn for sympathy or assistance. Probably it was well for her that it was so ; for there are certain states of the mind in which the slightest hope of foreign support will induce us to depend entirely upon it until it fails beneath us, when without it we should have grown energetic from despair or necessity.

Such was Gertrude's case at present. One resolution she came to at once ; which was, that no consideration should induce her to see Van-

deleur again. Every care and attention that gratitude and affection could suggest, she ordered to be lavished upon him ; but she determined not by the slightest yielding to her own feelings to add to the calumny that she knew was hovering over her, and which one unguarded movement might precipitate upon her head.

Her next step was to see Monsieur Dumoulin ; to mention, simply, that a dispute had arisen between the count and Vandeleur, in which the latter had been wounded ; and to endeavour to learn from him what means it was proper for her to use, in order to throw herself upon the protection of the lady of the English ambassador.

Accordingly, when Monsieur Dumoulin arrived, and had examined Vandeleur's wound, he was summoned to the presence of the countess.

To the first part of her communication he paid just as much attention as other circum-

stances led him to think it deserved; for he was shrewd and discerning: to the second part, he was able to answer little more than that he should next morning make it his business to procure her the information she required; as for himself, he knew nothing more than where the house of the English ambassador was situate, and that his lady was to have a splendid ball that evening. This he had learned by chance from Lady Harriet Stuart, whom he had been attending for a heavy cold which she had caught on her arrival at St. Petersburg two days before; but who insisted, contrary to his advice, on her being well enough to attend the fête that evening.

To remain another night in the hazardous and desperate situation in which Gertrude was now placed, was an alternative beyond her powers calmly to contemplate for a moment, even had she not deemed it absolutely incorrect; and her enthusiasm, and ignorance of the customs of the world, for once befriending her,

she formed her own plan, and during the absence of Dumoulin, who did not find Vandeleur's wound, though severe and painful, so alarming as to require his incessant presence, she put it into execution.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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